August 2014

Salt

The Art & Soul of Wilmington

Summer Shorts

Our Annual Reading Issue

Lee Smith

Jill McCorkle

Wiley Cash

Stephen E. Smith

Dana Sachs

Virginia Holman

Anthony S. Abbott

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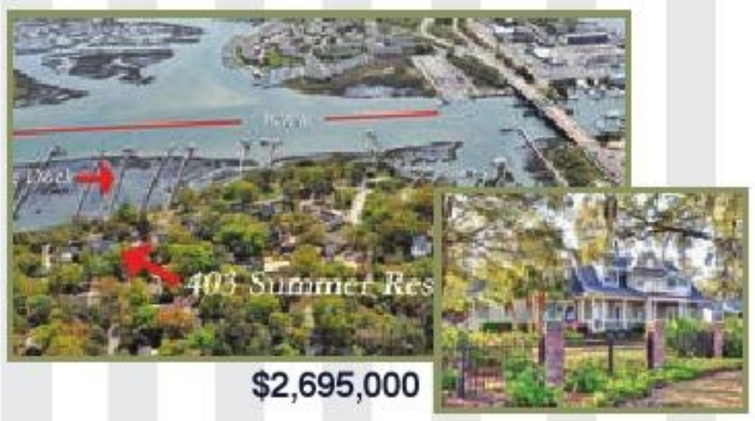

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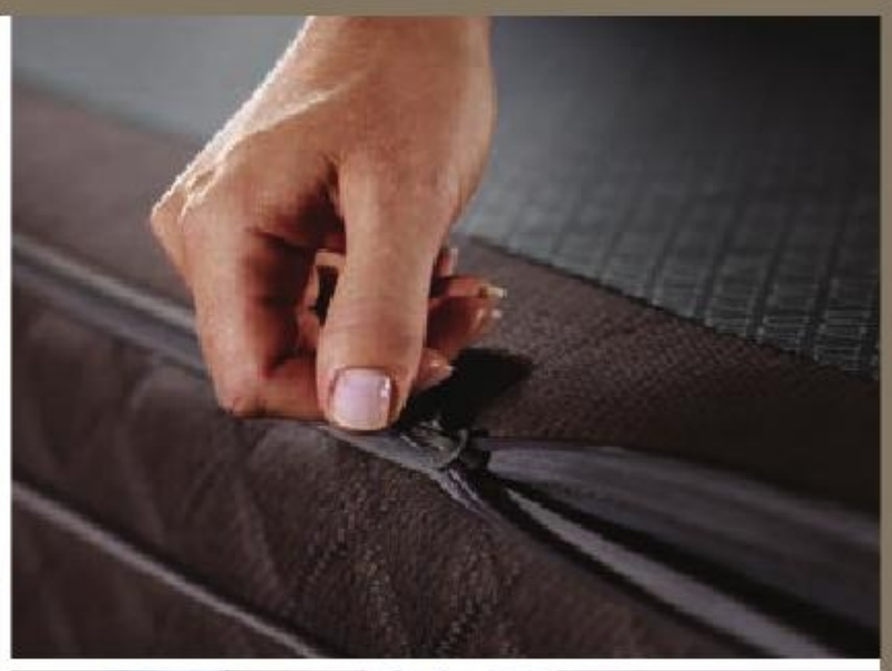

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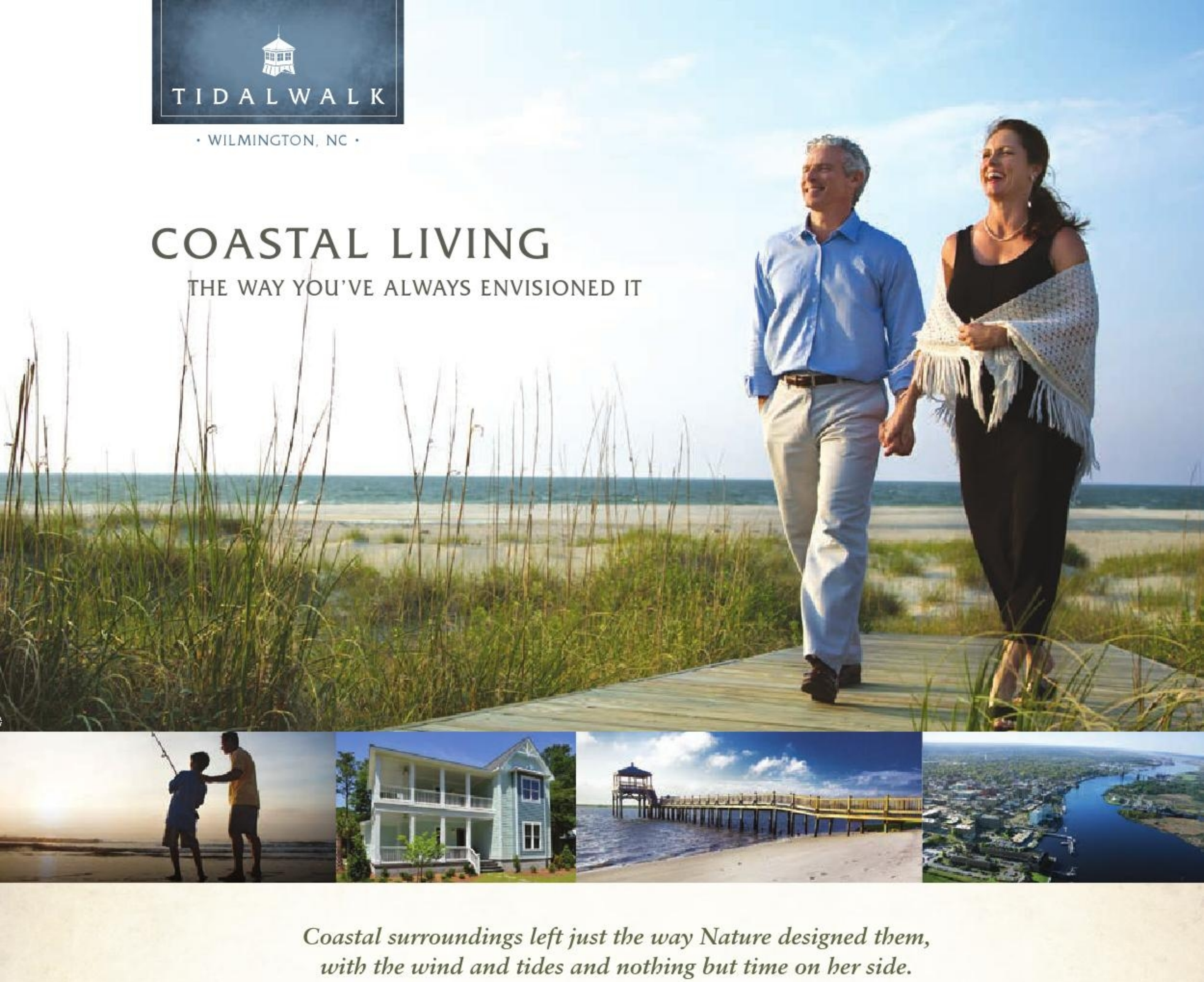

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BRUNSWICK FOREST
Coastal By Nature

Beautiful Killers

By Jim Dodson

Come the end of August, dragonflies will begin to disappear from the garden. Their lease, like summer's, is far too brief. I always hate to see them go.

The other evening I was watering my parched perennial bed when a pair of iridescent blue dragonflies zoomed up out of nowhere, performing a delightful pas de deux in the gentle spray of my hose. Though I don't know my dragonflies as well as I probably ought to, I believe these were a male (blue) and female (green) Eastern pondhawks on a dinner date.

According to a recent piece in *The New York Times*, new research shows dragonflies may be the keenest hunters in the animal kingdom, snatching and devouring 95 percent of their prey on the wing — not bad, notes *The Times* writer, for a dainty insect that belongs to the short-list of insects most people like, alongside ladybugs and butterflies, resembling flying "bubble bath or costume jewelry."

Equipped with compound eyes that are believed to be the sharpest in the insect world, and dual sets of wings that flap only thirty times a second (compared to a bee's 300) enabling a dragonfly to stop mid-flight and move in all directions at will, these ancient acrobats are believed to be the swiftest predators in the air, capable of reaching speeds of 35 mph or higher, which perhaps accounts for their voracious eating habits and need to consume up to thirty house flies or mosquitoes in an hour, all while in flight.

For this simple reason alone we should honor these beautiful killers of summer, which prey on any number of stinging and annoying insects that make being outside for a lowly human on a fine summer evening sometimes more painful than it's worth. Despite their fearsome optics, dragonflies actually can't sting humans or animals, though in their aquatic nymph form — which takes up well over half their lives — they can indeed deliver a sharp but harmless bite.

The research team that determined the dragonfly's impressive flying and eating habits also points out that their sophisticated nervous systems can lock on and track specific targets through clouds of other flying insects with such impressive skill that a mosquito or house fly rarely sees the creature that swallowed it whole.

The public clamor over the growing use of unmanned aircraft or drones by military and private commercial entities — promoting drones as an efficient way to deliver everything from intel on natural disasters to FedEx packages but raising significant concerns about the right to privacy — takes on an interesting new level of meaning when you learn that our military studied the killing efficiency and acrobatic brilliance of dragonflies for decades in order to decipher how they operate so efficiently. A dragonfly's brain, it turns out, may be the closest thing in the insect world to our own, the ultimate onboard computer designed for hunting and gathering — only better.

Then again, as a species they predate us on this Earth by hundreds of thousands of years, dating from the carboniferous period 300 million years ago when dinosaurs roamed the Earth and at least one species of dragonfly, long extinct, was two or three feet in length and weighed approximately the same amount as a medium-sized dog.

Dragonflies belong to a relative small order of species called Odonata, which translates to mean "toothed ones," a reference to the serrated mandibles that crush their prey to a pulp on the fly, with just 7,000 different species that includes their related cousins, the lesser-winged damselflies. Species of butterflies and bees, by comparison, number in the tens of thousands.

The fearsome name derives from ancient lore that dragonflies were indeed the progeny of flying dragons. In some places — the bush of Australia, for instance — dragonflies were considered (incorrectly) tormentors of horses and livestock, capable of delivering poisonous stings, while in medieval Sweden some believed they were sent by evil spirits to weigh the souls of unhappy people.

Most cultures welcome them, though, as signs of vibrancy and good health. In China they've long been regarded as symbols of spiritual harmony and prosperity; in Japan, chosen by the Samurai warriors as symbols of courage and integrity, perfect creatures balanced in nature. The Irish see them as the winged transport of fairies.

They enter our dreams and our gardens displaying a curiosity that prompted some to believe they might actually be messengers or angels in insect form. One common interpretation holds that dreaming about dragonflies — symbols of beautiful movement and grace — means your life is about to change.

A dragonfly's life is a study in transformation. Most of it is spent in nymph form under the surface of the water, sucking up nutrients like mad until it achieves pupae form and eventually sheds its skin before flying away for a surprisingly brief time, rarely living more than a month or two longer.

ILLUSTRATION BY LAUREL HOLDEN

Perhaps its only consolation for such brevity of life are its remarkable flying skills, intelligence and fragile beauty.

Having said this, several species have been known to fly 10,000 miles across India and Africa in search of a mate — the real purpose of their glorious colorings and acrobatic skills. Dragonfly love lasts only few seconds and often takes place, impressively, on the wing. The female lays her eggs in warm freshwater shallows and the males venture off to eat and soon die, a story as old as time itself.

Several years ago I was bass fishing on a lake late on a drowsy summer afternoon when a small squadron of iridescent blue dragonflies came out of nowhere and swarmed my boat, circling and whizzing by the end of my nose and the end of my casting rod, before zooming off in perfect formation. I'd never seen anything like it, a jaw-dropping airshow of synchronized flying worthy of the Blue Angels themselves. One of the performers even briefly alighted on my low-hanging fishing rod, seemingly as curious about the creature at the other end of the rod as I was about it. Just then a huge bass lurched brazenly from the water, just missing his prey, who darted away in the nick of time.

Last evening, after a rain shower cooled off a very hot afternoon, I had a second chance to study a dragonfly up close and personal, stepping out near dusk in a rush to meet my wife for an early movie only to find a lone pondhawk dive-bombing the upper garden birdbath. I decided it must be the same courting male I'd been watching all week. But the beautiful green female was nowhere to be seen.

As I watched, the blue male perched on the edge of the birdbath and let me come close enough to actually get a look into his extraordinary translucent eyes, curious what I might see there. Pride of a new dragonfly papa? Or maybe the grief of a beautiful killer who knows his duty is done, his time left on this Earth is measured only in days or weeks — perhaps even hours?

Time, wrote James Thurber, is for dragonflies and angels — the former live too little and the latter live too long.

If nothing else, as summer wanes and the days begin to shorten, the dragonflies of my garden remind me to pause and take note of this world's passing beauty before it vanishes too — and takes us with it.

Which may explain why, after a moment of sizing me up, the beautiful blue dragonfly zoomed away to dine on a few dozen delicious mosquitoes on the moist evening air before life, beautiful life, got away from him.

Contact editor Jim Dodson at jim@saltmagazinenc.com.

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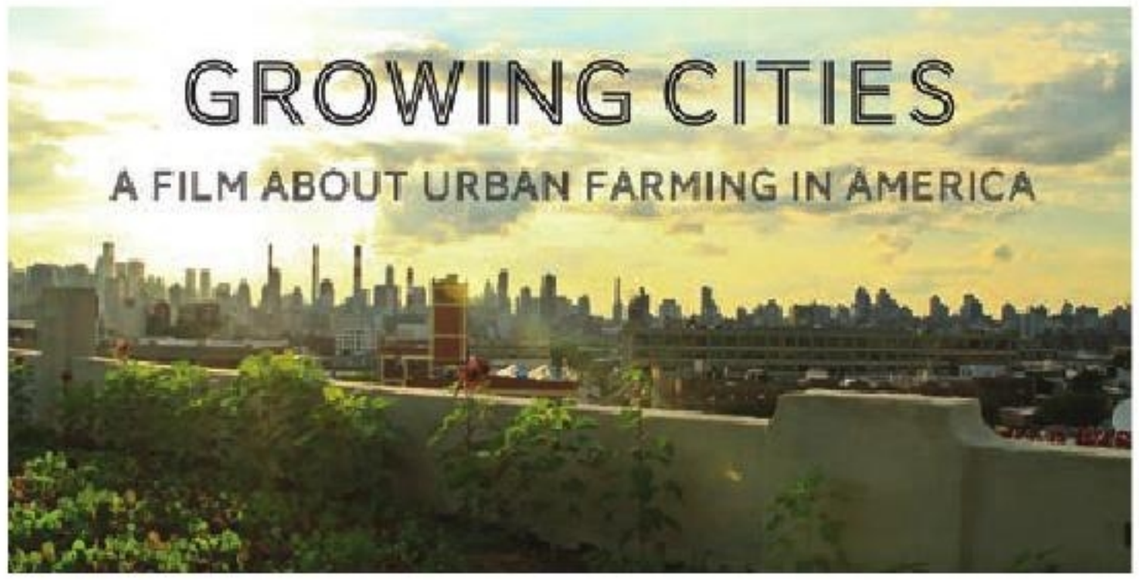
SaltWorks

As the Spirit Moves

In September, Forward Motion Dance Company will present a collaborative arts event—call it a mash-up of sorts, a multimedia production incorporating music, film, visual arts, and modern, contemporary and jazz dance—on the Main Stage of Thalian Hall. This month, on August 28, 7 p.m., you're invited to explore the creative process with the dancers during a don't-miss-it collaboration with cello soloist Jude Eden, visual artist Kristin Gibson, costume designer Rachael Goolsby and filmmaker Patrick Ogelvie. The evening will include dance performances along with open discussion about how each individual artist contributed to the creation of a specific dance piece. Choreography by Tracey Varga. Music by Jude Eden (cello), Paco Strickland and the Fabulous Flying Flamenco Brothers, and The North Carolina Guitar Quartet. Dancers include Ashley Barnes, James Devita, Rachael Goolsby, Linda Larson, Maggie Moore, Dan Smith, Becky Spivey and Becky Warfield. Admission: $10; $5/CAM members and students. Cameron Art Museum, Weyerhaeuser Reception Hall, 3201 South Seventeenth Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 395-5999 or www.cameronartmuseum.org.

He Said, She Said

I wandered lonely as a cloud . . . Don't dismiss it till you've heard it out loud. On Friday, August 29, Bigg B and Sandra (The Midday Miss of Coast 97.3 FM) will host a spoken word poetry jam that's sure to conjure up a few *amens*. The lyrical flow starts at 8 p.m. Expect humor, wit, and hypnotic cadences. Slam masters: We're saving up our snaps for you. Cash bar available. Admission: $5; $3/college students. Cameron Art Museum, Weyerhaeuser Reception Hall, 3201 South Seventeenth Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 763-0973.



Home Grown

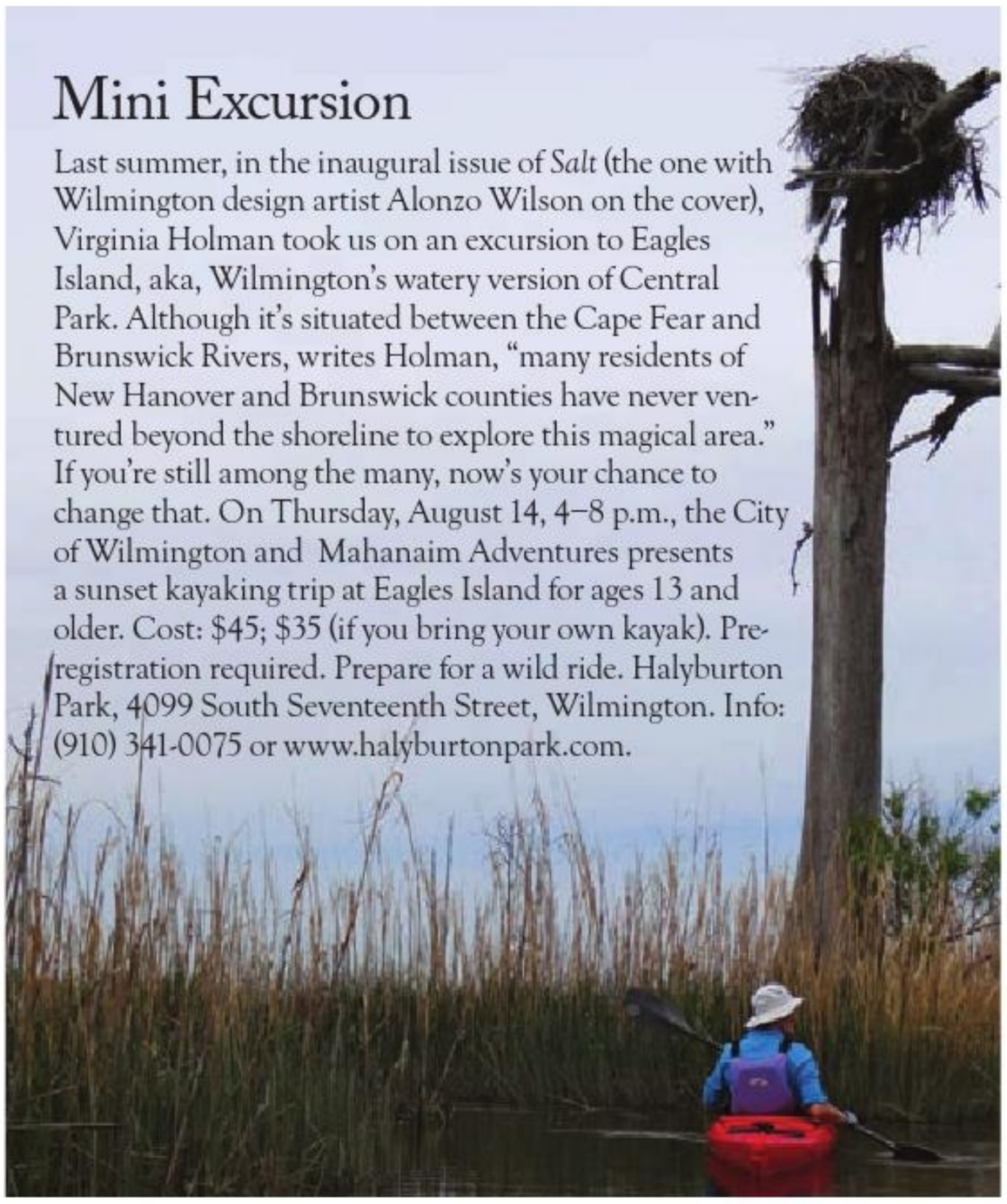
The thing about urban farming is that the sky's the limit. In San Francisco, for instance, the community keeps bees and tends a garden on the rooftop of one of the most radical Methodist churches in the country. But you can grow food anywhere: schools, patios, parks, abandoned parking lots—even up walls. On Saturday, August 9, Lettuce Grow Wilmington ought to get our wheels turning. Following the screening of *Growing Cities*, an award-winning documentary film that examines the role of urban farming in America, a local panel will hold an open discussion on Wilmington's current and future involvement in urban gardening programs. Hack the flowery language. Here, from 4–6:30 p.m., it's about taking action. Panelists include Terri Burhans (Cape Fear Community Land Trust); Evan Folds (Progressive Gardens); Steve Harrell (City of Wilmington); Dave Silvia (LINC); Jane Steigerwald (FeastDownEast); Jon Wooten (Master Gardener). Randy Aldridge of WWAY's Good Morning Carolina moderates. Admission: $30; $25/Friends of the Arboretum Members. All proceeds benefit the NHC Arboretum's Ability Garden programs. New Hanover County Arboretum, 6206 Oleander Drive, Wilmington. Info: nhcarboretum.com/events.

Fourth Places

All Fridays are created equal, but we're partial to fourth ones. That's when downtown Wilmington becomes an after-hours celebration of art and culture. This month, as '70s funk music blasts from the Riverfront stage, Fourth Friday Gallery Night overlaps with the Sarus Festival. This means that art will be everywhere. Repeat: Everywhere. In the form of dance, performance or site-specific installations. On the streets and inside galleries. On August 22, 6–9 p.m., wander and find an opening reception for realist artist Tatyana Kulida at ACES Gallery, craft beer at Bottega Gallery and Art Bar, and who-knows-what hither and yon. See website for map of participating venues. Info: artscouncilofwilmington.org.

PHOTOGRAPH BY JIM MIMNA

Mini Excursion



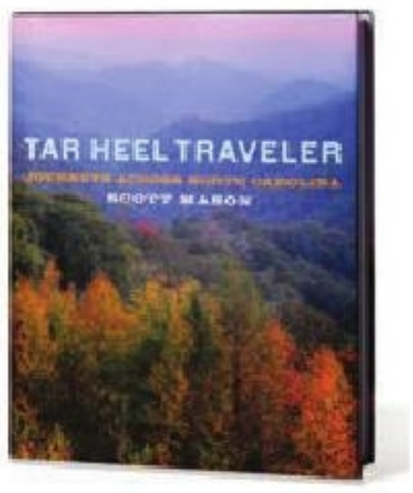
Last summer, in the inaugural issue of *Salt* (the one with Wilmington design artist Alonzo Wilson on the cover), Virginia Holman took us on an excursion to Eagles Island, aka, Wilmington's watery version of Central Park. Although it's situated between the Cape Fear and Brunswick Rivers, writes Holman, "many residents of New Hanover and Brunswick counties have never ventured beyond the shoreline to explore this magical area." If you're still among the many, now's your chance to change that. On Thursday, August 14, 4–8 p.m., the City of Wilmington and Mahanaim Adventures presents a sunset kayaking trip at Eagles Island for ages 13 and older. Cost: $45; $35 (if you bring your own kayak). Preregistration required. Prepare for a wild ride. Halyburton Park, 4099 South Seventeenth Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 341-0075 or www.halyburtonpark.com.

Speedy Gonzales

Fast and furious. That's how Rodrigo y Gabriela like to play. And since the acclaimed Mexican duo has been nominated for the 2014 AIM Independent Music Awards as Best Live Act, you'd better hurry – quick as a wink, swift as lightning, lickety-split – if you want to hear them shred their acoustic guitars this month at Greenfield Lake. In Mexico City, Rodrigo Sanchez and Gabriela Quintero played in a metal band called Tierra Ácida, aka, Acid Earth. They

felt somewhat stunted. When they moved to Ireland, the Rod-y-Gab sound lit up the Dublin bar scene. On Tuesday, August 5, discover what heavy-metal flamenco sounds like (indescribable) during a spellbinding, fleet-fingered performance that kicks off at 6 p.m *¿Cómo se dice* incredible? Tickets: $35–40. Greenfield Lake Amphitheater, 1941 Amphitheater Drive, Wilmington. Info: www.greenfieldlakeamphitheater.com.

On the Road Again



Scott Mason's spent time in our neck of the woods. He's been to Southport, where the street signs spell out funny messages. At Bald Head, he howled at the moon. He even took a Hollywood tour with the Port City's own Spiel Stevenberg and saw the riverfront table made famous when Nathan Scott gave Haley James the Crackerjack bracelet on an episode of *One Tree Hill*. This month, WRAL's Tar Heel Traveler returns to Wilmington for Stories From the Road, a celebration of the colorful characters, out-of-the-way places and rich history of North Carolina. On Thursday, August 21, 6:30 p.m., come hear the stories behind Scott's travels across the Tar Heel State. No doubt he'll enjoy meeting you. Bellamy Mansion, 503 Market Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 251-3700 or www.bellamymansion.org.

PHOTO BY HARRY SCHNITZLER

Kick in the Ribs

Four words: Smoke on the water. Aye, August 15–17, the Port City Rib Fest returns. This year, the three-day national BBQ and music festival features world champion pit masters, an all-star lineup of local and regional musicians, karaoke, a marketplace, and, baby, all the ribs you can eat. See website for schedule, details and everything you ever wanted to know about ribs. Y'all come. And don't skimp on the fixins this time. Battleship Park, 1 Battleship Road, Wilmington. Info: www.portcityribfest.com.

Sites for Sarus Eyes

Somewhere in India, on the western lowland plains, the lovers are dancing. They leap, bow, frolic round in playful circles. And when they tilt their red heads skyward, long necks stretched out like organ pipes, their passion is displayed by a series of loud trumpeting calls. Watch and see that the landscape becomes as much a part of the performance as these rare and graceful dancers. Certainly that's the point of the Sarus Festival. Except, in this case, the performers are not sarus cranes. They're local, regional and international artists. And from August 21–24, their site-specific and experimental art will enrich our cultural landscape by bringing stimulating, often downright visceral works to natural and urban spaces in the greater Wilmington area. The space informs the work, but the outcome could be an installation, a performance, a concert, a sculpture, a dance, a film, a lecture or something none of us saw coming. Sites include the Carolina Beach Boardwalk, Jengo's Playhouse, Cameron Art Musuem, Downtown Wilmington, Greenfield Lake, the slave quarters at the Bellamy Mansion, empty lots, beach strands and, well, we'll see. Free and open to the public; donations appreciated. Visit website for complete schedule. Info: sarusfestival.weebly.com.

Enchanted Airlie

Summer magic in a historic garden

By Ashley Wahl

I believe in everything until it's disproved. So I believe in fairies, the myths, dragons. It all exists, even if it's in your mind. Who's to say that dreams and nightmares aren't as real as the here and now? – John Lennon

If you're looking for magic, try standing in the holy presence of an ancient oak tree. Go in the morning, dewy-eyed, when the world is still stirring from dreamland. Nature will guide you. Just quiet your mind and believe.

**

Thursday morning, the sky an azure canvas, feathery cirrus clouds shift shapes above a lush and fabled garden. Winged stallion becomes luckdragon. Luckdragon becomes dandelion. Dandelion goes to seed.

In the distance, a woodpecker rap-rap-raps against a hollow tree, its steady percussion pulsing through Airlie like a beating heart. As an avian choir performs poems of summer, cicadas hum steady. Cardinal chirps: Over here! Over here!

Mockingbird says the same.

**

They say fairies come in many forms, travel by dragonfly, sleep beneath blankets of creeping fern.

**

To see them, slip through the gateway as early as you can. Head, first, for the Airlie Oak, the sacred, centuries-old goddess anchored in a grassy lawn flanked by the forest and the sea. Study her dark, furrowed bark. Marvel at her sturdy trunk, the subtle movement of her outstretched limbs, her resurrection fern. Imagine her roots, mirror image of her crown, teeming with life inside the earth.

**

If fairies dwell in Airlie, surely they dwell in these fern-laden branches, swinging from Spanish moss like aerial silk dancers. Forget ancient Athens. Shakespeare's Titania doth reign here. Perhaps she rides on the back of the great blue skimmer.

PHOTOGRAPHS BY MARK STEELMAN

**

Across the lawn, Ethel Maynes and Annie Terry plant purple snapdragon among a sea of flowering meadow sage.

Annie chatters. Ethel tends the soil, readjusts her wide-brim hat, watches an osprey roost on a tree by the water. Dirt stains the knees of her khaki pants.

"Annie is my secret garden name," explains Ethel's companion, whose eyes shine like sapphires when she speaks. "Most people just call me Ann."

Annie shares tales of mystical creatures, real and otherwise: native butterflies; Reilly the goose-herding border collie; an iridescent beetle, soup ladles for eyeballs, big as a Galapagos tortoise.

Like most volunteers, Ethel and Annie are here to witness and be part of the everyday magic of this historic garden.

**

Near Tranquility Gardens, a massive opalescent dragonfly gleams bronze, purple, cobalt blue. The critter, one of a dozen larger-than-life stainless steel installments by Chapel Hill artists Gary Caldwell and Holly Felice, is fit for a fairy queen. Each piece seamlessly blends into the enchanted landscape, magnifies the garden magic.

Inside the Butterfly House, where mourning cloaks flit from fern to bee balm to curled parsley, the princess in all-pink blows kisses to her fairy friends.

**

Take the nature trail. Feel the twigs and mulch give with every step, beckoning you deeper into the spirited woods.

Not a bird in sight from the waterfowl lookout, where sunning turtles and salamanders plunge into the water when seen. Follow the blue jay. Weave between the silk-spun turnstiles. Beside the concrete bench, the secret keeper, a dandelion floret dances in the filtered light. Reach for it and jump at the soft thud of a fallen magnolia seed pod a few feet away. Shrug it off as pixie play. Pick up the pod and feel the fawn-soft stem.

**

If you're looking for magic, watch the birds:

Mute swans floating in the center of the jade lake. Snowy egret, motionless in the shadows. Silted blue heron fishing in the shallows.

When the mind is quiet, Nature sings.

Our spy, senior editor Ashley Wahl is prone to wander. Though Front Street is no longer home base – we relocated to Market – the name stuck.

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The Hermit Comes Home

The strange and mythic life of the Fort Fisher Hermit comes to the Cape Fear Playhouse

By Gwenyfar Rohler

The age-old queries 'Who am I?' and 'Why am I here?' never cease to tug at the human heart and mind. Indeed, if the human condition explores anything, it is the question of where responsibility to others ends and responsibility to self begins. Here, the Fort Fisher Hermit became a living symbol of such mysteries.

In 1955, 62-year-old Robert E. Harrill escaped from a mental institution in Morganton, North Carolina, and hitchhiked to Fort Fisher with the intent of living his "Common Sense" philosophy. At Fort Fisher, he moved into an abandoned WWII bunker and began to scratch out a living from a small vegetable plot and the bounty of the marsh and ocean. He wrote at a furious pace: letters, journals and notes for his book on living. Curious about the newcomer, locals drifted out to meet him. Then tourists visiting the beach. Eventually, the Hermit became a destination himself, attracting visitors from all over. Everyone wanted to know more about the man who had forsaken society's rules to live on his own terms.

Almost sixty years later, Harrill's incredible life is coming to the stage at Big Dawg Productions' Cape Fear Playhouse on Castle Street. Written by Burlington playwright David Wright, the show explores the struggles of the man, not the myth, that was the Fort Fisher Hermit.

Last summer, Steve Vernon, the artistic director of Big Dawg Productions, and Audrey McCrummon, technical director, drove up to Burlington to see *The Hermit of Ft. Fisher* at the Paramount Theatre. "I knew I wanted to produce the play by intermission," Vernon confirms. But "I'd be lying if I did not admit that the subject matter was what drew me in initially."

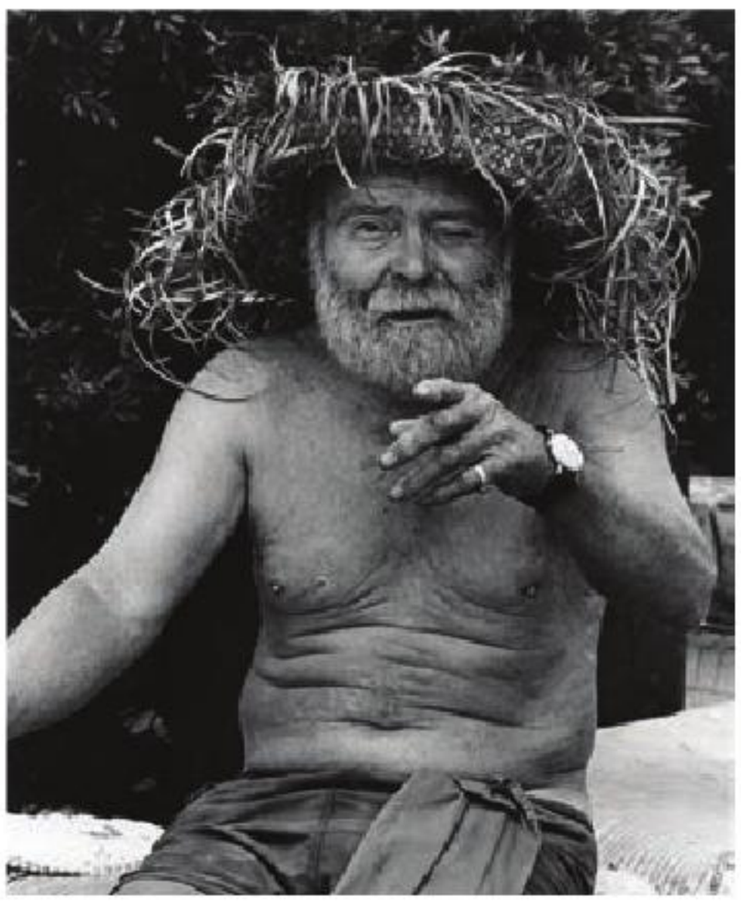
The portrayal of Harrill includes elements of the story that many people, even Hermit fans, are not aware of. "I think that even if this were a work of fiction, it would be entertaining and thought-provoking. The fact that the characters on stage are based on real people just makes the play even more fascinating to watch," says Vernon.

Wright began research for the play in late 2008, when his wife bought a book about Harrill. "She dropped it in front of me and said, 'You need to read this. There might be a play in this story.' She was right. The dramatic aspects of Robert's story were apparent from the beginning, particularly his tragic and mysterious demise," Wright acknowledges.

In June 1972, Harrill was found dead, spread-eagle on a pile of trash, in the World War II bunker at Fort Fisher that had been his home for almost twenty years. His death was officially ruled "heart attack" though evidence at the scene pointed to much more sinister activity. To this day, the death of the Fort Fisher Hermit remains one of the great unsolved mysteries of our area. "As to who killed Robert, I just don't know," Wright notes. "He was killed, either intentionally or, as is more likely the case, as a result of a prank or hazing incident gone bad. There are folks who claim to know the real story, but they're not saying, at least while they are alive."

Researching a biographical show is daunting at best. For Wright it included half a dozen trips to the Joyner Library/Special Collections section at ECU, where Harrill's papers and memorabilia are collected. "It took a long time to work through the enormous amount of material. It took even longer to distill everything into a coherent form that remained accurate to the facts of the story and the timeline," Wright observes. But Vernon thinks he has succeeded, admirably blending humor and drama with nostalgia and history to produce a poignant but realistic portrait. "To see a local legend portrayed in such an honest, stirring way was a very moving experience for me."

Not only is Vernon producing the show this August at the Cape Fear Playhouse, but currently he and Big Dawg are working on turning it into an annual outdoor drama at Carolina Beach. The historical outdoor drama is a form derived from European pageants of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, most notably passion plays. But in the New World, and North Carolina particularly, they have come to be associated with historical storytelling at the location of events. The Lost Colony in Manteo is the most well-known example, tracing the possible fate of the colonists at the site of their encampment. What is intriguing about the Hermit story is that it is not from one hundred or more years ago. It is very recent history, and many people who knew and loved the Hermit still live. To tell his story at the site of his transformation, the bunker he inhabited at the end of his life, is a very powerful opportunity to literally walk in his footsteps. It's also worth mentioning that, in his lifetime, Harrill and his home were the second largest tourist attraction in the state — surpassed only by the Battleship USS *North Carolina* in sheer numbers of visitors. Though Ava Gardner probably never made a private pilgrimage to the battleship, she did make a trip to see the Hermit.



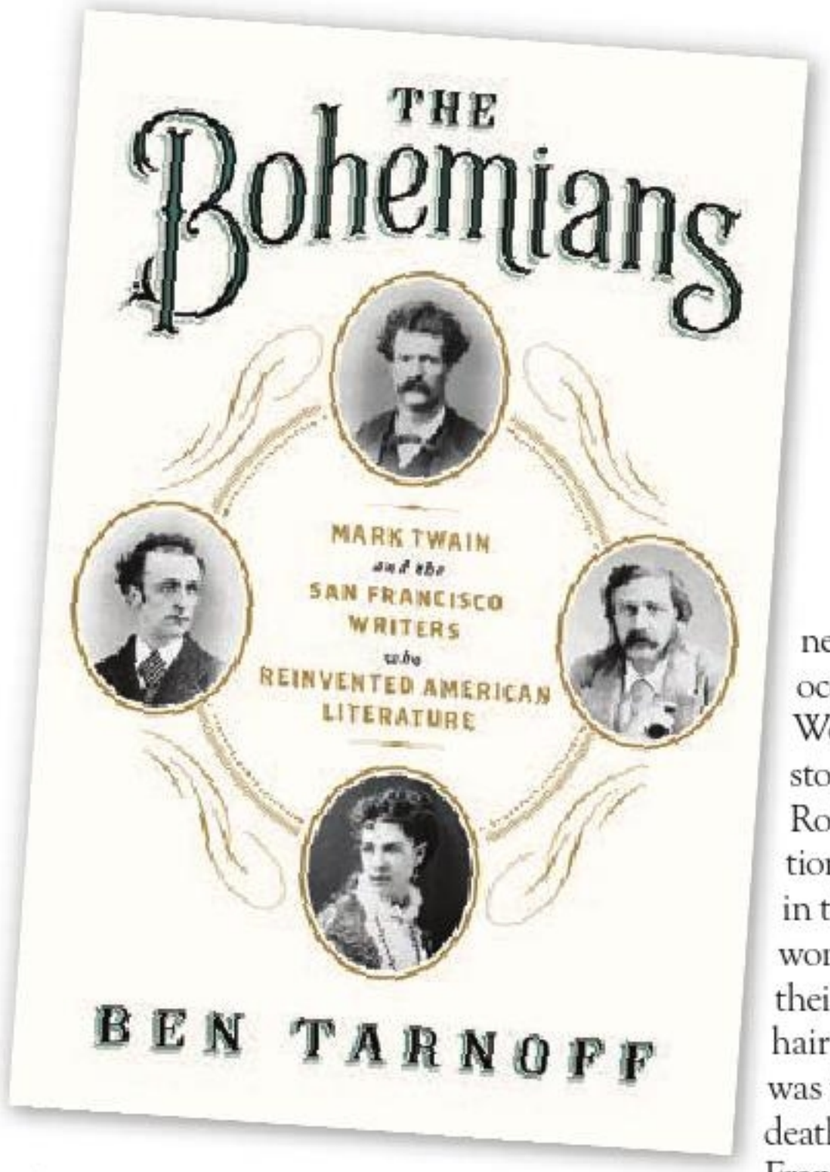
Plans for the outdoor drama continue to develop. In the meantime, Wright and Vernon are pleased to see the show come "home" to Wilmington. Wright especially has hope that the Hermit's message will resonate with local audiences: "I would hope that audiences come away with admiration for Robert as a survivor and a man that found redemption and strength from within himself," Wright observes. "He was in no way perfect, but who is? He lived his life as he felt compelled to do and, in the process, touched many, many lives for the good."

The Hermit of Ft. Fisher by David Wright, runs September 4–7, 11–14 and 18–21 at Cape Fear Playhouse, 613 Castle Street. Info: www.bigdawgproductions.org.

Gwenyfar Rohler fell in love with theater at Thalian Hall on her sixth birthday. She spends her days managing her family's bookstore on Front Street.

Bohemian Tales

Mark Twain, Bret Harte and the writers who reinvented American literature



By Stephen E. Smith

No writer has insinuated himself into American popular culture with the force and resilience of Mark Twain. He worked at being famous, and since his death in 1910, literary critics and popular scholars have continued to reinforce his efforts by turning out a steady stream of books and articles on every aspect of his life and writing. Ben Tarnoff's *The Bohemians: Mark Twain and the San Francisco Writers Who Reinvented American Literature* is the latest and certainly one of the more readable popular studies to have appeared in recent years.

Tarnoff's premise is simple enough: The writer we know as Mark Twain didn't evolve in a vacuum; he was the product of a fortuitous convergence of likeminded writers — Bret Harte, Ina Coolbrith and Charles Warren Stoddard — who matured as artists in a particular time and place. They called themselves the Bohemians, and they lived and wrote in San Francisco in the 1860s.

As a young writer, Twain was a frequent visitor to the city. With his wild shock of red hair, disheveled appearance, and his proclivity for overindulgence, he seemed the least likely of the Bohemians to achieve lasting fame. Nattily attired Bret Harte, whose impeccably crafted prose beguiled readers, was the rising star of the group, and it was he who gave the movement its name: "It [the Bohemians] came to represent a creative alternative to the mundane and mercenary in American life," Tarnoff writes, "a way to overcome California's crude materialism."

Both Twain and Harte began their careers as newspaper reporters who churned out poems and occasional human interest stories that catered to Western tastes. Harte, who's remembered today for his stories "The Outcasts of Poker Flat" and "The Luck of Roaring Camp," was the first to attract national attention with his reporting on the 1860 massacre of Wiyots in the village of Tuluwat. His graphic editorial — "Old women, wrinkled and decrepit, lay weltering in blood, their brains dashed out and dabbled with their long gray hair . . ." — first appeared in the *Northern Californian* and was then reprinted throughout the country, attracting death threats. In fear of his life, Harte fled south to San Francisco, where he found work as a writer and editor in the city's booming newspaper business.

Twain, an erstwhile riverboat pilot, literary freelancer and failed silver miner, arrived in the city to find it brimming with inspiration. "The birds, and the flowers, and the Chinamen and the winds, and the sunshine, and all things that go to make life happy, are present in San Francisco to-day," he wrote. While walking the streets he heard brogues, drawls, a jumble of languages, and tall tales, all of which he filed away for future reference. His "The Celebrated Jumping Frog of Calaveras County," a story he'd appropriated from oral tradition, would thrust him into the national limelight and signal the beginning of the end for the strain in American literature that drew its inspiration from genteel European writers. In the rhythms of frontier speech, Twain discovered the makings of an authentic American art.

The courageous Ina Coolbrith was born a Mormon, the niece of Joseph Smith, but left Illinois and the Latter Day Saints to strike out on her own. She settled in San Francisco in early 1862 and proved herself a poet of considerable talent (she'd later become California's first poet laureate). Her home on Russian Hill provided a salon for the young writers who'd flocked to the city for work.

Charles Warren Stoddard was a native New Yorker. He was an introverted, venerable, gay writer, whose formal verse found acceptance in San Francisco's newspapers and magazines. He was also a devout Catholic whose strong belief in the church's doctrine of forgiveness allowed him to ra-

tionalize his "temperament," a term he employed because the expression "homosexual" had not yet been coined.

Harte nurtured the writing careers of Stoddard and Coolbrith, and he generously employed his editing skills to soften Twain's rough prose. Under Harte's direction, the three writers joined with him to form a literary coterie not unlike the Algonquin Round Table and Beat Generation, and their work was widely read in a frontier hungry for low humor laced with an occasional touch of refinement.

Stoddard and Coolbrith aside — both rate as also-rans in the literary canon — Tarnoff's study focuses on the relationship between Twain and Harte. Their friendship, tempered by Twain's competitive nature and Harte's waning literary reputation, was a rocky one. Twain valued loyalty above all else, and he remained Harte's friend as their literary fortunes began to diverge. He lent Harte money, took him into the Twain household, and recommended him for various editorial jobs. But Harte's idiosyncrasies eventually overwhelmed their friendship and the two writers became enemies. Huck Finn may have refused to betray Jim, but when Harte applied for a cushy government job, Twain spoke out against his former friend. He wrote to William Dean Howells: "Harte is a liar, a thief, a swindler, a snob, a sot, a sponge, a coward."

Beyond the obligatory detailing of literary spats, gossipy infighting and personality quirks, Tarnoff excels at capturing the vitality of post-Gold Rush San Francisco and the burgeoning Western expansion. "Its citizens spent lavishly," he writes, "on feasts of oysters and terrapin, on imported fashions and furnishings. They drank seven bottles of champagne for every one drunk in Boston" and "To the first generations of settlers, the country beyond the Rocky Mountains was truly another world. Its strange weather, its monumental scale, the coloring of the sky and soil — all these were alien."

The degree to which readers will appreciate *The Bohemians* depends on their familiarity with the biographical materials already available on the writers whose careers Tarnoff scrutinizes. For well-read Twain and Harte aficionados, there's little to intrigue. But the story of the Bohemians as a literary movement is a compelling one, and Tarnoff is a superb writer whose descriptive and narrative skills will appeal to the most discerning readers.

Stephen E. Smith's most recent book of poems is A Short Report on the Fire at Woolworths. *He can be reached at travisses@hotmail.com*

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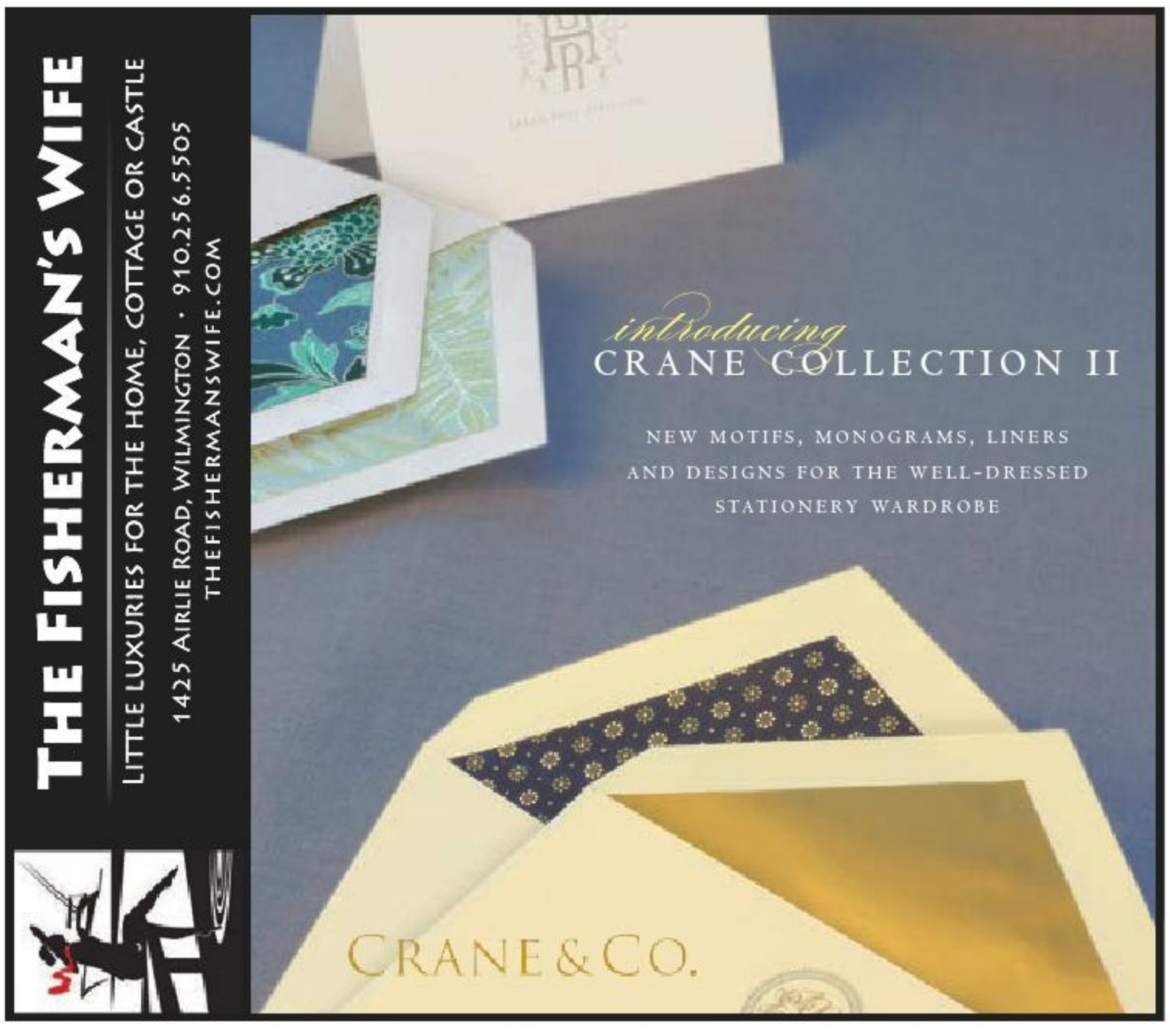

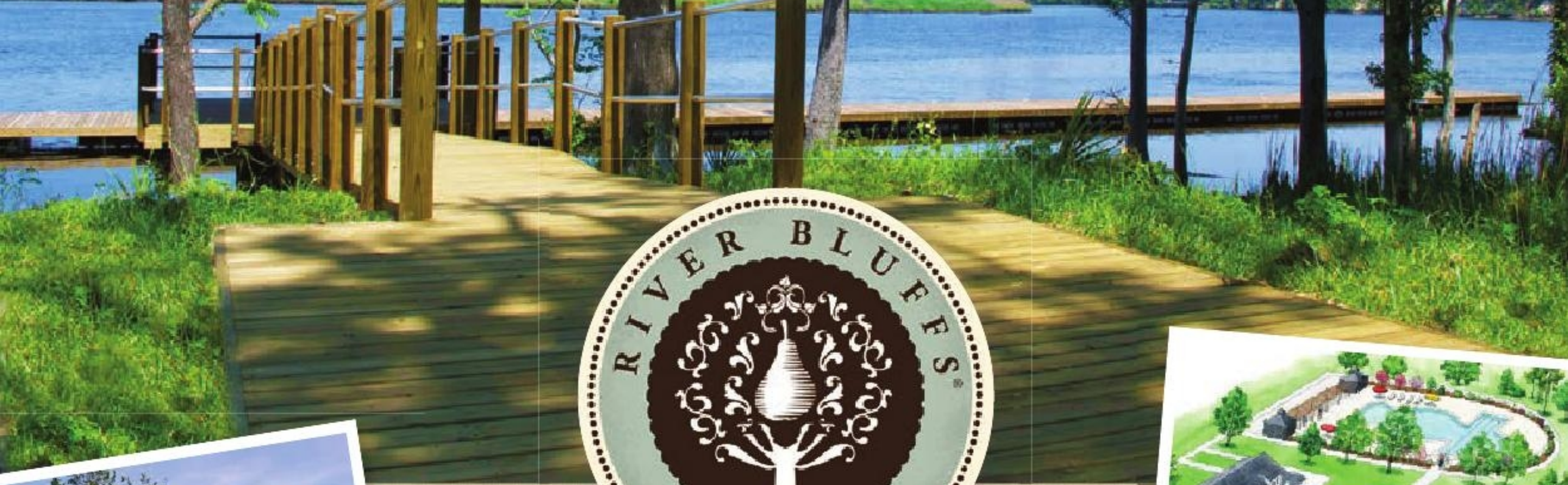

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Best Reader Memoirs 2014

My Marine

By Malinda Fillingim

I wasn't a bad girl. I was an angry girl. There's a big difference.

That difference wasn't obvious to most folks back in 1965. Back then, when we were living near Parris Island, I spent more time in the principal's office than on the playground, where my first grade classmates chased each other by the marsh, swung on the monkey bars, and threw Spanish moss at one another.

Luckily, the man who became my stepfather that year had good enough vision to see the difference. He was a Marine, the big kind that yells at recruits during boot camp. There were days when, from the backyard, I swore I could hear him yelling at the young men who were about to set foot on the soil of Vietnam.

The Marine said I had a temper — not necessarily a bad thing, he assured me, but it was something I needed to know how to control. Like knowing when to stop pumping up a bicycle tire before it erupts like a volcano.

I didn't like the Marine at first. Replacing a father I barely knew, he'd moved me away from the security of a grandmother whose stomach was soft and big like the top half of a buttermilk biscuit. My brothers and sister liked him even less than I did. Since they were much older, they had the right to decide where to live when my mother tied the knot with the Marine. They decided to live elsewhere.

Not me. A 6-year-old girl didn't have the right to do anything, not even pour milk over Reid's head after he pulled my pigtails. The principal said I had been in his office one too many times that first month of my first year of formal education. He said I wasn't being ladylike, what bossing the boys around and demanding equal time on the monkey bars and outshooting them at marbles.

The principal said I needed to learn how to be soft-spoken, submissive and refined, like a fine painting. I told him I liked bold colors with big strokes like a sunset that burnt the sky up. He said I was a hopeless case and placed me in the library behind the books nobody read.

The Marine heard my complaints about this treatment and visited the principal. Soon, I was back outside playing again, this time climbing the monkey bars whenever I wanted without Reid knocking me off. The Marine never had children before and wasn't sure what to do with a misplaced 6-year-old girl who had been homeless, poor, broken and neglected until he showed up. He didn't understand the loss of family, the emptiness of parents divorcing, the sorrows of losing all one found precious.

He didn't understand my anger, but he tried to understand my pain.

Mother said I had to take ballet lessons at the base where lessons were given for a nominal cost. He took me there, pink tutu in hand. I refused to wear it. The netting was hard and prevented me from sitting comfortably. I held it like it was a porcupine and fretted over wearing tights and shoes that squeezed the life out of me.

The Marine said I would be OK, that dancing would give me a good outlet for my anger. I told him being forced to wear such ugly clothes was just one more thing I was angry about. I hated pink. My sister always wore pink and she left me, running away without ever saying good-bye. I wanted to wear blue, like the sky above me, like the color of the Marine's eyes. Ballet was for girls who liked pink, not for angry girls who dreamed in blue.

We headed down the long hallway where all the classes were being held. Children whose fathers were gone off to war came here to dance, box, paint, sing, and do something I had never seen before: judo.

The boys were wearing loose-fitting white clothes with a small belt tied around their waists. They wore no shoes, just as I had done until I had to go to first grade and confine my feet by something Mother said was stylish: saddle oxfords. I had used a blue magic marker to color the white part of those shoes. Mother made me clean them with bleach though. She hated blue.

The Marine explained judo to me, how the body worked in different ways to move, to protect, and to defend. He said the movements began in one's head, thinking about the whole of life, not just the fighting part. It sounded wonderful to me and I begged to take it. He said it was a boys-only class and I had to take ballet.

I stared at the Marine. He had never told me no before, even when I wanted to see grown-up movies with him instead of the children movies Mother told him to take me to. I was disappointed in him, I answered, with both sincerity and a dash of manipulation. I explained that dancing was for girls who had no anger, who had never been homeless, eaten mud for breakfast and who'd never watched their siblings disappear.

I don't know how he did it, but the Marine finagled me a spot in the judo class, even though the instructor said he could not protect me from the boys. The Marine laughed, saying he was worried about the boys getting hurt, not me.

I loved judo. With each new lesson and each new move, I became less angry and more in touch with my own power, realizing it was OK to be blue at times.

I wasn't a bad girl. I was an angry girl. There is a big difference. Thankfully, the Marine knew that anger itself was not the enemy, nor the girl who carried anger in her heart until someone loved her enough to help her love herself.

Malinda Fillingim teaches English as a Second Language at Cape Fear Community College, where her husband of thirty-one years, David, teaches religion and philosophy. Her writing has appeared in Christian Science Monitor, Decision, Alive, Chicken Soup for the Soul, *and various other publications. Her first job in high school was as a reporter for* The Stokes Record *in Walnut Cove, North Carolina, the Marine's hometown.*

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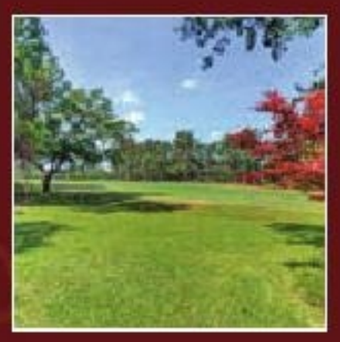

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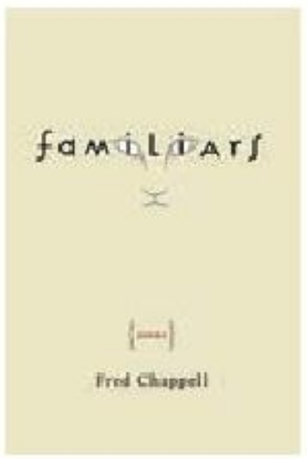
N.C. WRITER'S Notebook

By Sandra Redding

The first week of August hangs at the very top of summer . . . like the highest seat of the Ferris wheel when it pauses in its turning.
– Natalie Babbitt

August Book Events



August 7 (Thursday, 7 p.m.) Scuppernong Books, Greensboro. A celebration of Fred Chappell's newest book of poems, *Familiars,* with readings by Fred and National Book Award finalist Sarah Lindsay, author of *Debt to the Bone-Eating Snotflower.* scuppernongbooks@gmail.com

August 14 (Thursday, 6:30–8:30 p.m.) Benjamin Vineyards and Winery, Saxapahaw. Join 2014 Piedmont Laureate Carrie Knowles for a free writing workshop. Buy a glass of wine and enjoy the sunset as you write. To sign up, email cjknowles@earthlink.net.

August 17 (Sunday, 11 a.m. – 2 p.m.). Fourth Annual Carolina Writers Networking Lunch, Charlotte, sponsored by the North Carolina Triad Chapter of Murder We Write. Meet authors, editors, publishers, librarians and agents. Limited to sixty, so register ASAP by email: info@murderwewrite.org.

September 5–6 (Friday & Saturday). Carolina Mountains Literary Festival, Burnsville. A gathering of writers, readers, listeners and learners. Barbara Bates Smith adapts and performs off-Broadway productions; Cathy Larson Sky of Spruce Pine is an Irish fiddler who combines oral verse with old-time tunes; Terry Roberts, a lifetime educator, writes about family. Plus, Press 53 Publisher Kevin Morgan Watson of Winston-Salem and Kathy Pories, senior editor at Algonquin Books in Chapel Hill, will be on hand to offer editing and publishing advice. Tickets: cmlitfest.org

September 6 (Saturday). Annual Bookmarks Festival of Books and Authors, Winston-Salem. Over fifty award-winning authors will gather at the Milton Rhodes Center for the Arts. A panel on the "Future of the Book" will be led by Robin Miura, co-director of Carolina Wren Press, and Carolyn Sakowski, president of John F. Blair, Publisher. Robert Morgan will sit on the Southern Identity panel and Frances Mayes of Hillsborough will provide her views on how to adapt a book for film, television and video games. bookmarksnc.org.

Congratulatory Notes

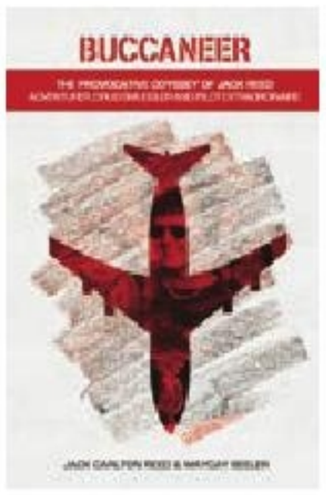
Peggy Payne's most recent book, *Cobalt Blue*, set in Pinehurst, won a medal from the Independent Publisher Book Awards (IPPY) in the Visionary Fiction Category. IPPY awards honor superior literary works by publishers other than the five major New York houses. Ecotone, the press at the University of North Carolina at Wilmington, won an IPPY in the anthology category for *Astoria to Zion, Twenty-Six Stories of Risk and Abandon from Ecotone's First Decade.* And John F. Blair of Winston-Salem published *Long Gone Daddies,* by David Wesley Williams, which garnered an IPPY for fiction.

Movie land has smiled on Ron Rash, who lives in the North Carolina mountains. His haunting novel *Serena* has been adapted to a film which will be released later this year. The leading roles of a lumber baron and his determined wife will be played by Bradley Cooper and Jennifer Lawrence.

At 92, prolific Chapel Hill fiction writer Elizabeth Spencer has been awarded the $30,000 Rhea Award for lifetime achievement in short stories. Her past achievements include five consecutive O.Henry Awards.

Writing Lessons

Maya Angelou died May 28, 2014. The most quoted of all North Carolina's authors, she left behind a bounty of words to inspire, teach and enrich lives. How should we put words to paper? "The idea is to write it so that it slides through the brain and goes straight to the heart," she once advised.



The value of surprising readers is the lesson learned from reading *Buccaneer: The Provocative Odyssey.* This nonfiction page-turner, a collaboration of adventurer Jack Reed and Winston-Salem TV personality Maycay Beeler, will surely keep you on the edge of your armchair. First Jack chronicles his misdeeds: smuggling cocaine in his plane, becoming involved with the infamous Medellín Cartel and living in a tropical paradise with a girl young enough to be his daughter. These escapades take place before Jack is thrown into prison (no surprise). Then Maycay, an accomplished pilot, surprise, surprise, flies in to help the aging pirate complete his book and get out of the pokey. More surprises: pictures of Jack's paintings, handwritten notes to Maycay and after-death visitations. Definitely takes one's breath away.

Thanks for sending your literary news. Keep me updated at sanredd@earthlink.com.

Greensboro writer Sandra Redding's novel, Naomi Wise: A Cautionary Tale, *is a riveting story about heartbreak and hope in a Quaker community. Email her at sanredd@earthlink.net.*

Sound To Town

How live theatre and the Thalian Association were born in Wilmington

Mrs. Louise Worth Washburn

Mrs. Margaret Devereux Lippitt Rorison

Samuel Selden, Hubert Heffner and Professor Frederick Koch

By D. Anthony Rivenbark

The Three Graces were the Greek goddesses of charm, beauty and creativity. In the 1920s, Wilmington was home to three such muses: Mrs. Louise Worth Washburn, Mrs. Ernestine Lott Hogue and Mrs. Margaret Devereux Lippitt Rorison. At a time when there was great interest in the development of Wilmington's cultural arts scene, these remarkable ladies were instrumental in establishing the Port City's first civic theatre organization. But more on that and the three graces later. First, a little perspective:

There is no clear narrative of the history of community theatre in America. The earliest recorded performance by amateurs was in 1665 when *Ye Bare and Ye Cubb* was performed in Fowkes Tavern on the eastern shore of Virginia. Following the American Revolution there are records of gentlemen's theatrical societies in Edenton, New Bern, Fayetteville and Wilmington. Women joined amateur theatre clubs sometime after the Civil War. The Footlight Club, established in Jamaica Plains, Massachusetts, 1877, is credited for being the oldest continuously producing amateur theatre in the United States. But by the end of the nineteenth century, every sizable community in America was mounting amateur pageants, plays, and tableaux.

Around 1910, the European Art Theatre Movement, with its revolutionary changes in theatre technique, playwriting and acting styles gave impetus to the new Little Theatre Movement in the United States. After World War I, there was a shift of rationale from America's little theatres (i.e. intimate productions presented in small auditoriums) to an approach primarily concerned with community stories and civic pride. The term "community theatre" came into popular use to describe these efforts.

The development of community theatre in North Carolina was greatly influenced by Frederick H. Koch, who arrived at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill in 1918 and swiftly established the drama department and its touring wing, the Carolina Playmakers.

Koch's work had far-reaching effects. His students, among them Thomas Wolfe, Maxwell Anderson and Paul Green, testified to his influence, and his ideas and actions were seminal in community theatre in the United States and in the increasing respectability of theatre in the academic curriculum. One of the ways Koch helped to stimulate this interest was through his "pageant-dramas," productions with large community casts that presented local history using music and dance to add to the spectacle. This eventually culminated in the symphonic outdoor drama form best represented by *The Lost Colony.*

In 1921, Koch worked with the Wilmington community and supervised *The Pageant of the Lower Cape Fear.* For three nights, the banks of the Cape Fear River below the Dudley Mansion were transformed into a large amphitheater seating one thousand people. With a cast of five hundred, it was billed as North Carolina's "biggest historical spectacle." The success of that event and the annual tours by the Carolina Playmakers continued to stimulate the public's interest in theatre. At some point in 1928, Wilmington's three "graces" began to develop a plan to capitalize on this interest by launching a Little Theatre for Wilmington.

PHOTO OF MARGARET RORISON COURTESY OF THE FAMILY OF MARGARET LIPPITT RORISON.
PHOTO OF LOUISE WASHBURN COURTESY OF THE FAMILY OF LOUISE WORTH WASHBURN.

Greenville Manor

Thirty-two-year-old Louise Worth Washburn, who spent her summers at Shandy Point, her family's Sound home, had always had an interest in theatre. Entries in her teenage diary described how the boys and girls took turns hosting parties, and how they paid for the parties with money earned from doing backyard theatricals.

Ernestine Lott Hogue, 34, the oldest of the three, was born in Winston-Salem and attended Salem College. She was the only one of the three ladies to appear in the *Pageant of the Lower Cape Fear*, appearing as the allegorical character, "Progress"; her husband played the role of Governor Tryon.

Margaret Devereux Lippitt Rorison, 28, was born in Wilmington but spent much of her childhood in Bremen, where her father was head of the German offices of Alexander Sprunt and Sons Cotton Brokers. Of the three, Margaret had the most training and experience in theatre. Having studied dramatic art at Bennett College under the direction of British playwright and actor Charles Rann Kennedy, she appeared in numerous productions in New York and acted professionally for a brief period.

As recorded in Louise Washburn's scrapbook, the three ladies organized an evening of theatre on Thursday, December 18, 1928. That evening, Walter P. Sprunt and his wife, Julia Worth, both ill with the flu, were in their home on North Third Street. "The Little Theatre guild is having an amateur play at our house on the Sound tonight. Louise Worth is one of the leaders — we are not able to attend," wrote Sprunt in his diary.

For that evening, Sprunt had turned Greenville Manor over to his sister-in-law for theatrical use. Built around 1920, the handsome Tudor Revival house stood next to his father's house, Tannahill. Both homes are located on a large tract of land overlooking Greenville Sound, which had been purchased from the Worth family. Washburn, Hogue and Rorison converted the large, wide hall that ran through the house into a theatre. The first play presented was *Thursday Evening* with Edward Hardin as "The Husband;" Ernestine Hogue played "The Wife;" and Louise Washburn and Mrs. Robert Calder played their respective mothers-in-law. Next, Margaret Rorison performed a dramatic reading of *A Minuet*, a verse play set in the French Revolution with music provided by Mrs. John Dennen Corbett. The final offering was a comedy called *A One Word Play* performed by Robert deRosset and Emma Bellamy Williamson, who had just been acclaimed Queen of the Pirate Festival. According to Mrs. Washburn's scrapbook, as many as seventy-five people attended. Thanks to the evening's entertainment, the concept of forming a local theatre was enthusiastically received.

During the third week in January, 1929, an organizational meeting of the Little Theatre Guild of Wilmington was held at the Chamber of Commerce, which was located in the Odd Fellows Building, directly across from City Hall. According to an account in the *Wilmington Morning Star*, Robert deRosset was elected president, with Mrs. Cyrus Hogue vice president and Mrs. Hugh MacRae as treasurer. With nearly one-hundred-and-fifty members, the Guild announced that their next performance of two one-act plays would be given at the St. James Parish House in February of 1929.

The playbill shows that the production took place on Monday, February 11, at 9:45 p.m. As a prelude to the one-act plays, a musical number entitled "Who'll Buy My Violets?" was performed by Miss Florence Potter and accompanied by Mrs. A. M. Waddell. Also in the number were four French Flower Girls played by Emma Bellamy Williamson, Beverly Northrop, Helen Reilly, and Margaret deRosset. The first play, *Spot Cash* by Elizabeth Hall Yates, was set in a contemporary cafeteria and had a cast of three: "The Cynic" played by Robert Strange; "The Lover" played by Robert deRosset; and "The Girl", played by Mary Hardin. Between plays, Miss Potter performed another song, "By the Bend of the River."

The evening concluded with *The Twelve-Pound Look* by Sir James Matthew Barrie, who is most famous for writing *Peter Pan*. The plot concerns an overbearing husband, Harry Sims, who hires a typist to answer messages of congratulations on his impending knighthood. The typist turns out to be his former wife, Kate, who left him after scraping up twelve pounds to buy a typewriter. She is quite contented with her lot, and her fearless humor contrasts with the joyless life of the second Lady Sims. At the end of the play, the second Lady Sims asks her husband for twelve pounds

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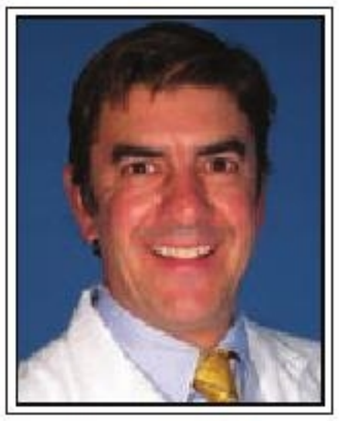

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so she can escape as well. Edward Hardin played the role of Sir Harry; Lady Sims was played by Rena Nelson MacRae; Kate was played by Hattie Taylor Schiller.

The success of these performances gave the members of the Little Theatre Guild of Wilmington confidence that the Port City was ready and eager for a permanent organization representing the entire community. The *Wilmington Morning Star* stated on March 14, 1929, that the Guild had always planned to create a permanent community association and had asked Professor Hubert Heffner, assistant director of the Carolina Playmakers, to direct the formation of proposed community players. Heffner was already scheduled to appear in Wilmington with the Carolina Playmakers' presentation of two plays by Paul Green on March 22. The group arranged for Heffner to come down a week early for a public meeting on March 16, 1929. That morning a profile about Heffner appeared in *The Wilmington Morning Star* which described his work as director of theatre at the Universities of Wyoming and Arizona and his work with the Carolina Playmakers.

According to a brief history recorded by Mrs. Hogue, the meeting had been advertised by the mailing of over three-hundred letters which resulted in a large crowd gathered at the YWCA, which was located on Second Street where the New Hanover County Library stands today. According to the *Wilmington Morning Star*, Mr. deRosset read papers relating to the relationship of the nation-wide Little Theatre Movement with the traditions of Wilmington's theatrical past. In Mrs. Hogue's notes, she described Heffner's talk as "delightful" and "inspiring." Heffner proposed that "the Thalians" would be preferable to "Little Theatre Guild" as the name of Wilmington's new community players. He related that the derivation from the name of the Greek Goddess of drama, appropriate in itself, was made more so by the famous and remarkable amateur dramatic society that existed in Wilmington in the nineteenth century. A motion was made and unanimously voted that the name "Thalian Association" should be adopted.

Their first appearance as the newly renamed Thalian Association was on April 16, 1929, at a meeting of the Thursday Morning Music Club, which was held at the Academy of Music (Thalian Hall). There were two plays given on that evening. The first play was a farce entitled *A Cup of Tea*. The second was a repeat from the Greenville Manor evening, but this time *A Minuet* was staged with a full cast including Margaret Rorison, Charles Hooper and Eugene Graham. Music was provided by the High School Orchestra.

On Friday May 31, 1929, for their first ticketed public performance, the Thalian Association

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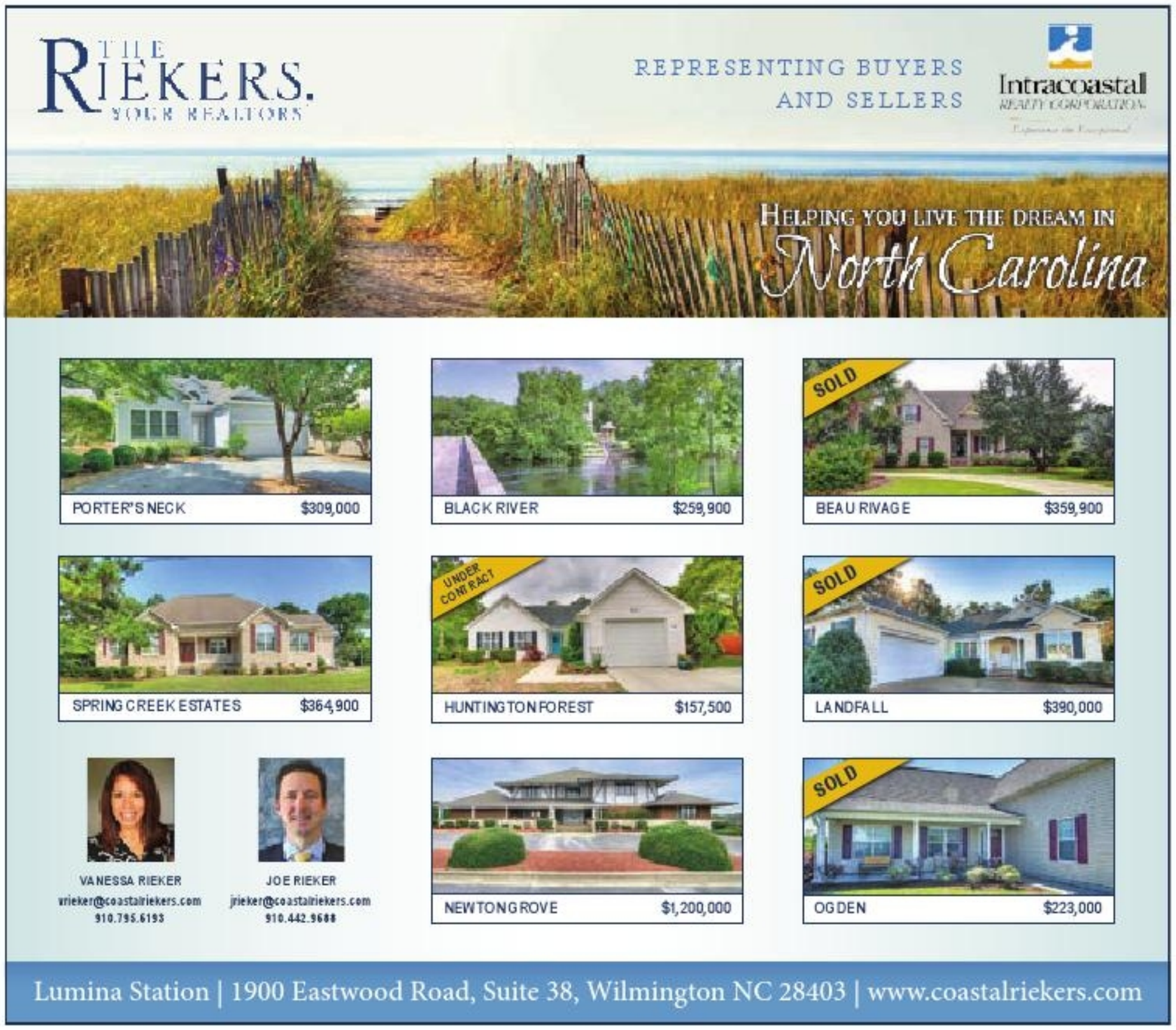
presented three one-act plays at the Academy of Music. The first was *The Robbery*, a 1921 comedy, with Edward Wooten, Lillian Christie, Meade Bolden and David Sinclair; the second was *The Valiant*, a tragedy set in a prison; played by Eugene Graham, William Sutherland, Ernest Beale, Eliza Symmes and June Mallard. The final piece, *Beau of Bath*, was a costume drama in verse set in the eighteenth century and performed by William Hargrave, John Dennen Corbett and Louise Worth Washburn. Hogue and Washburn had worked up the program notes for the evening's playbill as follows:

"The present Thalian Association was organized in 1929 and is the fifth amateur dramatic organization of the same name that has existed in Wilmington, North Carolina. The original Association was formed during the first few years of the nineteenth century and the fourth — the immediate predecessor of the present Association — ceased to function at the time of the War Between the States.

By adopting the name, Thalian Association, the present group has attempted to tie in the old and honored tradition of the past with the modern Little Theatre Movement and in its proposed new constitution the aims of the society are set forth as follows to create, stimulate and foster among its members self-expression through dramatic and kindred arts to perpetuate the honored traditions handed down by our predecessors in the Thalian Association to endeavor to contribute to the intellectual enjoyment of our community by the presentation of artistic and dramatic productions and to inculcate in the members a demand for and love of the highest standards of dramatic art. With its purpose thus expressed, the Thalian Association becomes a community wide organization and as such asks the support of the public in order that its aims may be furthered."

These goals, set forth eighty-five years ago, are just as valid today. In just six months, three determined woman took an idea from concept to realization resulting in an amateur theatre organization to serve the entire community. The process they began has had an enormous influence on the theatrical life of Wilmington and has made this community a more interesting and lively place. Ladies, please take your bow.

D. Anthony (Tony) Rivenbark has served as the executive director of Thalian Hall Center for the Performing Arts, Inc., for thirty-five years. He has received many awards for his work on the history of theatre in Wilmington. His new book on Thalian Hall by Arcadia Press will be available at a book signing at Thalian Hall on August 17.



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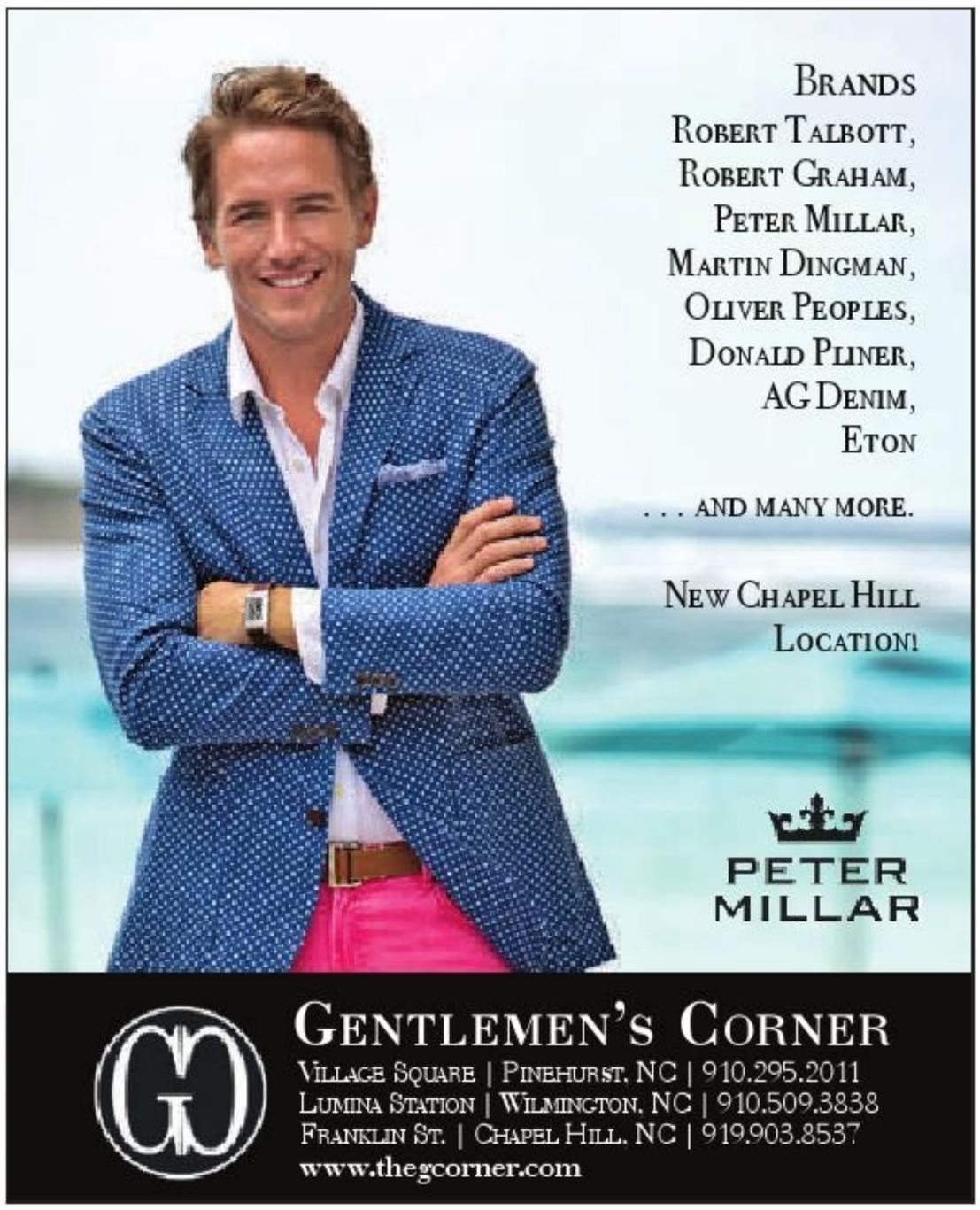
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Board for Life

At Cape Fear Games, members of the growing Wilmington Board Game Group play their hearts out, face to face

By Skip Maloney

They gathered relatively early, five of them, this past Memorial Day. By 10 a.m., they were set up on a table, at Cape Fear Games on Oleander Drive, waging war. Specifically, they were waging what was known as "the war to end all wars" – World War I – fought between 1914 and 1918, with an estimated 37 million casualties, including the deaths of six million soldiers from the Entente Powers (France, Italy, Russia, the United States and Great Britain), and four million from the Central Powers (Germany, Austria, Hungary and the Ottoman Empire).

They played a board game called Axis & Allies, or more accurately, a World War I edition of that original game. Rather than call the new edition "Central Powers & Entente Powers," the publisher (Avalon Hill) went for the more recognizable, World War II terminology – Axis & Allies: 1914 The War to End All Wars.

On this Memorial Day, Pete and his teenage son, Jacob, took command of the Central Powers, Pete,controlling Austria, Hungary and the Ottoman Empire, as Jacob commanded the forces in Germany. Tom, Chris and Luke played the role of the Entente Powers, Tom taking France and Italy, Chris coordinating efforts between Russia and the US, with Luke in charge of Great Britain.

Crafted with known histories of the regions' varied economies, populations and military capabilities (troops, tanks, ships and submarines), players purchase "military units" and put them out onto the board to do battle against the enemy, battles waged through one of the oldest game devices known to man – dice – which almost any military man or woman will tell you is as likely to recreate the eventual outcome of a battle as the real thing.

The board map of the world is arrayed with small colored chips, and tiny plastic figurines, moved by the five combatants on their turn. As they play, the two sets of allied powers discuss what they're doing among themselves, and take some time to explain what they're doing to an observer as well. Chris, on his turn, reaches onto the board and moves a stack of chips with a plastic soldier on it, from one country on the board map to another, removing the chips and plastic soldier of an opponent.

"Of course," he said, remembering that it was, after all, Memorial Day, "these represent thousands and thousands of real people."

Six hours later, Pete and Jacob had successfully altered history and forced Tom, Luke and Chris to surrender.

"Short story?" Chris said of the defeat. "They had better dice rolls."

**

Learning and living a little bit of history is just one of many reasons that members of the Wilmington Board Game Group gather regularly; once a

PHOTOGRAPHS BY ERIN PIKE

week, at minimum, though often more than that. Someone posts a message on the Yahoo Group page, asking somebody, anybody, if they want to play something, somewhere, sometime. It is how the Axis & Allies group got together on Memorial Day.

Axis & Allies is a particular type of game, a war game. It's one of the oldest types of games that they play, but it doesn't represent the totality of the group's gaming activities. Generally, they play what are known as multi-player strategy games, most of which have been designed and published in the last twenty years. Occasionally, they will break out a classic game, like Sid Sackson's Acquire, designed in the year that the Beatles appeared on the Ed Sullivan Show (1964). Most of the games can be played in less than two hours.

The group got its start in the spring of 2005, when Chris Hill, one of the Memorial Day five, initiated a conversational thread on BoardGameGeek.com, asking if there were any players in the Wilmington area who'd be interested in getting together. BoardGameGeek, launched in 2000, primarily as a resource database for the board gaming hobby, had, by 2005, become a recognized authority on the subject of board games. The site features detailed game reviews, public forums, and a buying/selling marketplace for a database of over 66,000 games, most of which are rated on a 1–10 scale by over 400,000 international users.

Through the site, Chris made contact with local residents Chuck Parrott and Mike Mayer. At Mayer's home, on June 19, 2005, the Wilmington Board Game Group met for the first time. They played a cooperative game called Shadows Over Camelot, three times, as well as Carcassonne, and a brand-new (at the time) game called Ticket to Ride.

"Back then," said Hill, who is acknowledged as the group's informal historian, "we were only meeting on the weekends. The creation of the Yahoo Group page was almost immediate. It was how we stayed in touch."

Members of the group continue to be notified via email of the regularly scheduled weekly gathering on Thursday evenings. The group went from meeting in private homes to a game store called Time to Game, which closed in 2007. They went back to private homes, and then, in 2010, settled into the gamer-friendly confines of Cape Fear Games, on Oleander Drive.

"I got rescued by Heath Newton (owner of Cape Fear Games)," said Jill Cesarsky, who joined the group when she started dating co-founder Chuck Parrott, and became a regular host of the gatherings.

While acknowledging that she, as a woman, is a small contingent of the group's demographics, she notes, too, that it's "not just a bunch of old men" (like me, she was nice enough not to say).

"There's a wide variety of ages," she added. "Mike and Sinead (Tagliaferro, as examples) are young parents, and there are a few other women in the group, too."

The group's "home" (Cape Fear Games), caters to more than just the Wilmington Board Game Group. In its newest location in Anderson Square on Oleander Drive, the store offers 8,200 square feet of retail and plenty of playing space. It also hosts a much larger group that plays what are known as collectible card games, with Magic the Gathering (MTG) being the best known example of the genre, which has been played since the store opened by over 1,300 participants who register for regular tournaments. They also host monthly meetings of The Cape Fear Historical Miniatures Gaming Group.

"Cape Fear Games would not be around if I had not started playing MTG on-line back in 2003," said Newton.

When he started to notice the amount of money being paid for valued cards in the game, Newton took out a student loan to buy and sell MTG cards between classes at UNCW. In the ten years since, his business (MTGO Traders) has grown to be one of the world's largest online distributors of the game's ongoing collection of cards. To offset his frustration over the absence of a game store in Wilmington, Newton teamed up with former high school friend Andrew Westin, and in 2009, Cape Fear Games opened on Oleander Drive.

"Cape Fear Games has grown a good bit since November 1, 2009, and we now have fifteen employees," said Newton. "We love face-to-face gaming, and even though video and phone games seem to be taking over, there are a lot of people that would rather sit down and play a tabletop game with their friends."

"I really treasure the social aspects of gaming," said Chris Hill, "and we lose that to video gaming. This (current) generation could be the first to not know how to socially interact with each other. There's a lot to be said for the interaction of social gaming."

Cape Fear Games will host its first board game convention — Cape Fear Games presents Board Games on the Beach — next spring (April 24–26, 2015) at the Hampton Inn, Medical Park on 17th Street. For further information about the convention, the store, and its Magic: The Gathering arm (MTGOTraders.com), call the store at (910) 798-6006. For information about the Wilmington Board Game Group, contact Skip Maloney, at SkipM624@aol.com, or the group itself, online, at its Yahoo Group page.

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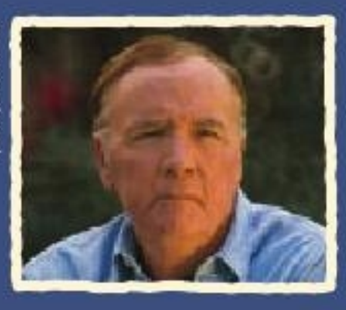

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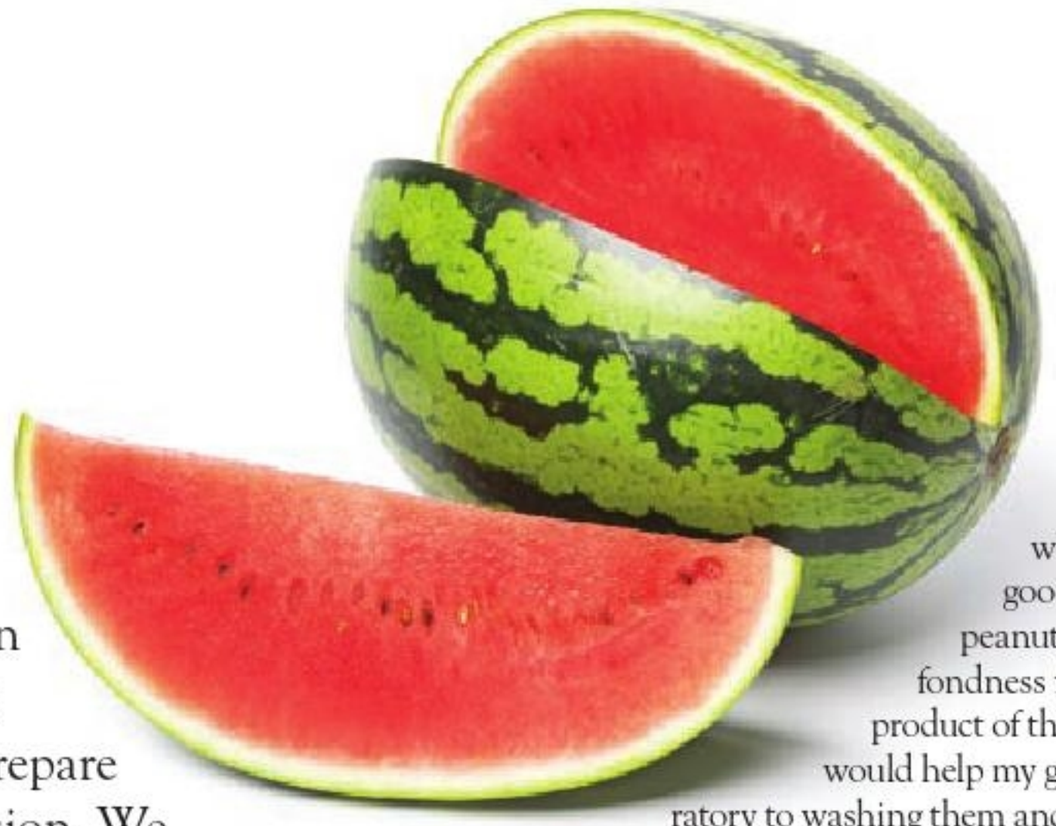


By Bill Thompson

There is probably nothing more central to The Southern Culture than food. It is an essential part of everything we do. We prepare special food for every occasion. We take it to the neighbors when they're sick or when somebody dies. We celebrate weddings and birthdays and any other occasion that we can generate that might be a venue for serving food.

Many folks, including my wife, center their lives around the planting, cultivation, harvesting and preparation of food. Conversations at almost any gathering eventually come around to how our gardens are growing, the latest recipes, the menu at the new restaurant, and what we recently saw on a particular cooking show.

There is a whole genre of cuisine called "Southern cooking" that is revered by some and reviled by those who consider it detrimental to our health. And then there are those, like me, who are aware of the hazards of so much of what defines Southern cooking (butter and salt and grease, namely) but love to eat it anyway.

So when I heard some folks say they needed some "comfort food," I wondered how they managed to narrow that category down from the vast array of comestibles available to us. Was some food comfortable and some uncomfortable? I first tried to determine if it was the food that caused the comfort or if it was merely the circumstances around the consumption of a particular food that created the comfort.

Then I thought of what is sometimes referred to as "soul food": collards; butter beans; fried anything, particularly chicken and pork chops; steak with rice and gravy; baked sweet potatoes; corn on the cob; field peas mixed with white rice (called hoppin' John); little Irish potatoes; and fried okra or squash. Usually this food was served for Sunday dinner or any special time when the extended family was at the house.

After considerable deliberation and a lot of actual tasting, I determined that "comfort food" is mostly in the mind of the one doing the tasting. Once again I strengthened my belief that "Everything in the world is personal."

The first food that came to my mind, the food whose consumption caused me to instantly feel good about my immediate circumstances, was boiled peanuts. I have written and talked at length about my fondness for this soggy legume. My association with this product of the soil hearkens back to my early childhood when I would help my grandmother pick the goobers off the vines preparatory to washing them and placing them in boiling water with enough salt to float a battleship. My family, every available generation, would sit on the porch or in the yard as we eagerly ate the peanuts hot from the shells in which they were boiled. Conversation and laughter would mix with the breeze as it blew across the tobacco fields and under the pecan trees.

But probably the happiest venue for eating boiled peanuts was in the tobacco warehouse as my sister and I sat on piles of neatly stacked tobacco just prior to the auction of the now disdained leaf. The tobacco sale represented the culmination of a lot of hot, tedious labor that resulted in money to pay for school clothes, mortgages and higher education for a lot of people in southeastern North Carolina. You have to admit, that's a very comforting feeling.

The other food of my childhood that still tastes as good as the memories preserve it is cold watermelon in the summertime. I try to reproduce the splendor of its consumption as often as possible. If you pick the watermelon from the field in the late afternoon, place it somewhere where it will cool overnight (like a well or creek); then the next afternoon, you cut it lengthways into long slices and eat without the aid of utensils.

In determining what constitutes comfort food, I have to mention a personal favorite that confirms my proposition that comfort food for one is not necessarily comfort food for another.

I love liver and onions on a bed of hot cooked rice. Yes, I have had people tell me I have a warped palate. But when I was growing up, my mother would sometimes fix this dish for our evening meal. I guess one of the reasons I still enjoy it is the memory of the aroma that always accompanied that particular supper as Mama prepared it and I played outside with my sister and the neighborhood kids until the night would creep up on us and Mama would call us to come in. Liver and onions smells like home.

Yeah, comfort food is a personal thing.

Bill Thompson is a speaker and author who lives just down the road, in nearby Hallsboro.

Lunch That Measures Up

At Lovey's Natural Foods Market, good eating – and better health – are in the palm of your hand

By Dana Sachs

J'nelle Ruscetti tells a story about the evening her son complained of a stomachache. She and her husband are both medical practitioners, so they asked the questions doctors ask, focusing on the possibility of appendicitis.

Then J'nelle thought, Wait a minute. When was the last time their son ate anything? Not since lunch, he answered. They gave him dinner and, as J'nelle remembers it, "he was instantly cured."

The diagnosis? He was hungry.

According to J'nelle, children in our society eat so constantly that they experience hunger too rarely to recognize it. We're snack-obsessed, which means that 6-year-old soccer players end their games with bags of Doritos and that middle school trivia contestants earn Krispy Kreme doughnuts as prizes. J'nelle recalls being invited to run choir practice for the 3-year-olds at her church. One of her duties included providing snacks. But choir practice ran from 5 to 6 p.m. "They will either have just finished dinner or they'll eat dinner as soon as they get home," she reasoned. "What do they need a snack for?"

As she sees it, we've turned into a "grazing society," where every activity includes food. And it was as an effort to reconsider the way we eat, and to help kids and their families move toward healthier lifestyles, that J'nelle wrote *Family Fitness Challenge*, a book that takes a common-sense approach to food and exercise. Rather than focusing solely on weight, she concentrates on helping people lower their body mass index (or BMI). People with high BMI suffer drastically increased rates of heart disease, asthma, orthopedic problems, breast cancer and many other ailments.

Given the topic of her book, J'nelle and I decided to meet at Lovey's Natural Foods Market, one of the healthiest eateries in town. The café at Lovey's offers an organic hot and cold bar, an extensive menu of made-to-order items, and, um, a wide array of desserts, mostly gluten-free.

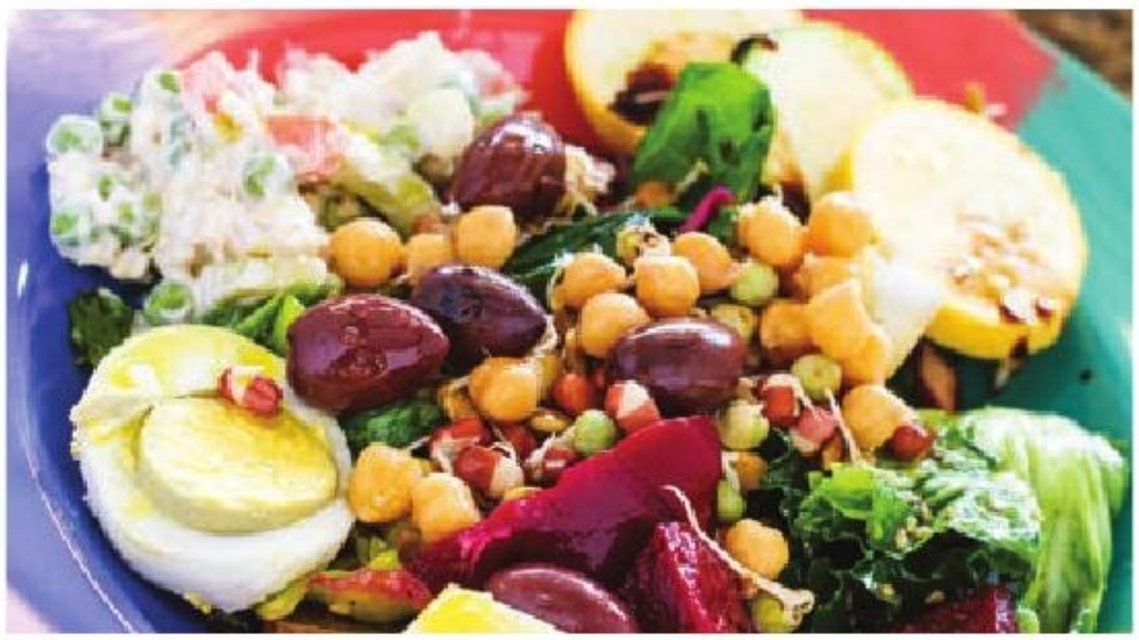
We started with the salad bar. Lovey's selection of bright and beautiful produce includes fresh raw spinach, sliced peppers, tomatoes, cucumbers, plus more exotic fare, like "sprouted beans." You could do well at Lovey's if you were a hamster, but eating healthy does not require limiting yourself to celery. "My program is not a diet," explained J'nelle, who is both ardent in her cause and good-humored about it. Most diets, she pointed out, focus too much on body image. "I couldn't care less about how my daughter looks in a prom dress," she told me. Her program, with its emphasis on health, goes "so much beyond what you look like in a swimsuit."

J'nelle happily dug into Lovey's mock chicken salad, even though it included mayo, because the key word for healthy eating – and, yes, I know you've heard this before – is "moderation." To demonstrate, she put down her fork and held up her hand. "See the size of my palm? That's the amount of protein I can eat. My son can eat as much as the size of his palm. My husband has a bigger palm, so he can eat more." As for fat, look at your thumb. "You want to eat the Snickers from your Halloween bag?" she asked. "Fine. Just use your thumb as a guide."

It helped, too, that we ate our produce-laden salads first. Fruits and vegetables fill the stomach quickly, promoting a sense of satiety. We weren't feeling ravenous, then, when we turned to Lovey's heavier, made-to-order fare: a turkey burger with fries (which J'nelle pronounced "classic"), a falafel and hummus wrap ("awesome") and her favorite, a chicken and cheese quesadilla ("not your typical greasy cheese quesadilla").

Family Fitness Challenge includes references to biblical passages to illustrate its points. The connection between spirituality and a healthy lifestyle means something to J'nelle personally, and she believes the passages may

PHOTOGRAPHS BY JAMES STEFIUK



encourage others as well. Readers can choose to ignore these sections, too, though J'nelle believes that the wisdom in lines like "Your body is your temple" can "hit home for everyone."

Mostly, she hopes to introduce a new way of thinking, and she sees that happening when she meets with kids. Last year, she went into classrooms to teach elementary school students about healthy lifestyles, and she continues to conduct regular low-cost community workshops that are subsidized by the Wilmington Health Foundation. After learning about nutritional labels, one school participant, a second-grader, asked her father to steer clear of protein drinks filled with high fructose corn syrup. "Second-graders," J'nelle said, "have the power to take this information home to their families and change how they all eat."

In her workshops, J'nelle provides participants with pedometers and suggests walking 8,000 to 10,000 steps a day. When you start thinking in terms of steps, you realize, as she puts it, that exercise might be great for you in many ways, but "it's not the most efficient way to lose weight." That three-mile jog you took this morning burned off the calories in a Dannon yogurt, not the calories in a Big Mac. And when J'nelle tells her students that they'd have to walk 2,000 steps (a little less than a mile) to make up for the calories in a juice box, Capri Sun becomes a lot less enticing.

"I ask kids, 'How many steps to burn off a glass of water?'" she told me. "They say, 'Five?' 'No. Zero. You have to go zero steps to burn off a glass of water.'"

At Lovey's, we stuck with sparkling, no-calorie Pellegrino.

And then came dessert. Not just dessert, but a whole fancy tray of treats — baklava-like honey nut bars, a maple-flavored carrot cupcake, chewy peanut-butter-and-jelly cake bars, slightly crunchy chocolate-covered peanut butter flax truffles, and creamy chocolate-dipped cannolis, all of which, except the cannolis, were gluten-free. It was entirely delicious. I know, because we tried everything. Let me say that differently: We tasted everything. And then, after tasting, we left the rest on the platter. I asked J'nelle if she'd like to take the leftovers home to her kids and she gave me a look that said, "Have you been listening at all?" We'd eaten our thumb-ful of fat already.

I surveyed the desserts, remembered my sweets-loving husband and kids at home, and thought, Do they really need this stuff? Then I tossed it all in the trash.

Lovey's Natural Foods and Cafe is at 1319 Military Cutoff Road, in the Landfall Shopping Center. For more information, call (910) 509-0331 or visit www.loveysmarket.com. For copies of J'nelle Ruscetti's book, or to read her blog posts on family fitness, visit www.ruscettifamilyfitnesschallenge.com. Information about her workshops is at www.wilmingtonhealth.com/family-fit-challenge.

Dana Sachs' latest novel, The Secret of the Nightingale Palace, *is available at bookstores throughout Wilmington.*

Summer's Swan Song

Reminder memo to self: Get to the beach early

By Jason Frye

Following the path under the fig trees and past the carpet of Lady Banks roses, the sky wide open above you and only the sea oats between you and the shore, it's easy to think that the beach will be all yours.

When your feet hit the soft sand proper, you kick off your flip-flops and take the final steps to the crest of the path barefoot, the morning's heat seeping in through your soles. There, immediately before you, a pristine patch of sand and wave.

One more step and you remember that everyone else came here to stake a claim on their slice of beach, same as you, but they got here earlier. Your solitude; your workweek reward; your quiet, restive beach was here just a few minutes ago, but you missed it again.

**

You'd think that by now — after living here your whole life, or for just a decade, or for just a season — you'd know better than to leave late for the beach. You'd know that our beaches are best enjoyed at the extreme ends of the day: before our summer visitors push back plates of pancakes at Causeway Café and Cracker Barrel and descend on our beaches like an invasion force, or after they've had their fill of the heat and the sand and leave, red as newborns.

**

The conversation goes like this:

My mom: What time do we need to be at the beach in the morning?

My wife and me (in unison): 8:30. Or we could go late in the afternoon.

My dad: That early? That's crazy, we're on vacation.

Me: Unless you want to see me bite someone over a parking space, 8:30.

Keep in mind that my parents always visit during the week of July 4. Also note that not once have we arrived at the beach by 8:30.

**

I've managed not to bite anyone over a parking space, but a few years ago, I almost did. It was a beautiful beach weekend — high clouds, perfect ocean breeze, turquoise waters — and we'd slept a little late, arriving at the beach closer to 9 a.m.

If you've lived here for a few years, or have almost attacked a family in a parking lot as I have, you know that by 9 a.m. on a beautiful beach Saturday, parking is nonexistent.

We drove to the beach, passed our regular (and secret) spot, then our backup, then our third choice, and then decided to retreat to the extreme northern end of

PHOTOGRAPHS BY JAMES STEFIUK

Wrightsville Beach. There, in a tiny parking lot I saw some folks leaving. A family of bright red children, a dad packing a wheelbarrow's worth of beach gear, and a mom in a floppy hat and Elton John sunglasses piling into a van. I was in luck. I stopped, put on my signal and breathed a sigh of relief.

That's when the other car came in from the other direction. We looked at one another, then to floppy hat mom, and back. Floppy hat mom seemed nervous, but she pulled out all the same, but ignoring my turn signal, came out toward me, allowing my competitor (parking-spot latecomer and turn-signal ignorer, I might add) to scoop up the spot.

A chimpanzee-like rage descended on me and I said some things we can't print here. Then I drove us to the farmers' market (where I park agita-free) and to breakfast, where I channeled my still-simmering chimp rage toward a biscuit sandwich.

That was the last time I was late for the beach. Now I'll get up at dawn if it means obtaining my parking space and avoiding the likes of the evil parking-spot swoopers.

**

Fig trees love it here. They're tall, prolific fruit growers and plentiful at the beach. Walk down any beach entrance that's not at a public parking lot and you'll see them. Around this time of year, the fruit's ripening and if you get to the beach early like I do, you can grab a half dozen to eat before you even unroll your towel.

They're even better at 11 a.m., when you're strolling back to the car, hungry from playing in the water and logy from napping in the sun. And the looks on the faces of the late-arriving beachgoers as you munch down another perfect fig, wearing a look of absolute (and almost post-coital) beach-morning satisfaction, is worth the $2.50 an hour you shelled out for that perfect parking spot.

**

August is here and it marks the unofficial end of summer. Parents will soon be buying blue jeans in bulk for the coming school year, and high school students will read three novels off their summer reading list in a week. College students will descend on us in droves. But we, the ones lucky enough to live here full time, will have the beach to ourselves soon enough. With the water warm enough for swimming well into October and the sun hot enough for tanning through September, we get the beach at the best time. No radios. No smoking tourists. No (OK, few) kids feeding Cheez-Its to the gulls. Just the beach the way we like it: empty save ourselves.

Jason Frye is a travel writer and author of Moon North Carolina *and* Moon NC Coast. *He's a barbecue judge, he rarely naps, and he's always on the road. Keep up with his travels at tarheeltourist.com.*

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The Enlightened One

Sometimes the most challenging destinations are off the map

By Jennifer Chapis

Vipassana is the meditation

method that Siddhartha Gautama, commonly called the Buddha, used to reach enlightenment 2,500 years ago. A non-religious practice from India, Vipassana is said to eradicate egocentric delusion and reveal the harmonious truth of existence.

But there's a catch. Learning the technique requires ten days of silence: no talking, writing, reading, television, music. And of course, no phones. Imagine it: 240 hours without voicemails, texts, or emails . . . Apparently, ceasing communication altogether is essential to self-observation. No smiling or hand gestures even — no kidding.

Of all the places my spiritual journey had led me — including the Ganges in India's Himalayas, the summit of Haleakalá volcano on Maui, and Cathedral Rock in Sedona — I had a hunch that, perhaps, the most magnificent destinations cannot be found on a map. I'd contemplated a silent retreat for years. I was finally ready. So, then, why did I feel like I was shipping myself off to prison?

I'm not just a people person. An astrologer friend says my desire to cultivate close relationships is like a fish's urge to swim. Connection and intimacy are akin to food and water. I can't survive without them. Leave it to me to try to turn Vipassana into a social event — I wanted to bring a friend. Ha!

My transformation process began the moment I realized I needed to go alone.

I packed modest skirts, pants and shirts with long sleeves (no shorts or tanks allowed), toiletries (must be unscented), a flashlight. I mailed a card to my brothers-in-law. "Happy Birthday, Greg!" Knowing this would be the last thing I'd write for ten days, I felt grateful for each word.

Upon our arrival at the Southeast Vipassana Center in Jesup, Georgia, the managers made us promise to abstain from lying, stealing, sexual activity (including with yourself), intoxicants and killing (including mosquitoes). We agreed not to have contact with the opposite sex, take painkillers, or eat dinner. We agreed to meditate eleven hours a day.

Practicing one hour of meditation at home had caused me to discover I was an energy healer. *What*, I wondered, *would eleven hours do?*

Day 1: I enjoy visualizing light filling my heart when I meditate. However, the Vipassana mind is empty. No creative manipulation of any kind. After an hour, I wanted something more. But, as instructed, I refocused my attention on my nostrils, simply feeling the air pass in and out. The subtlest knowing whispered in my ear: *"Your impatient boredom is actually fear."*

At breakfast, the bench-style seating faced the walls. We weren't allowed to look at anyone, but I covertly inventoried my meditation mates: Girl-with-Seashells-on-Tiny-Braids, Girl-who-Looks-Like-My-High-School-Boyfriend, and so on. Though my stomach was growling, I would've traded my oatmeal and prunes just to know what Woman-in-White did for a living, or why Woman-Wearing-Sari looked so angry. And who was I? Girl-who-Wishes-We-Could-Eat-with-the-Men? Woman-who-Dresses-Stylishly-Even-Though-No-One-is-Looking? Woman-with-a-Mind-Full-of-Distraction?

Day 2 moved slower than I knew time could. After thirty-six hours in silence, I would've gratefully answered if Freddy Krueger were calling from Elm Street. In between meditation sessions, I drank water. Studied my toes. At breaktime, I headed to the woods, but the path we were allowed on made two short loops, so I walked in circles for an hour. I kept hoping to run into a fellow meditator. *Where is everyone?*, I wondered.

Day 3: I noticed myself piling more lentils onto my plate than I could eat. To my right, Girl-who-Draws-in-the-Sand heaped soy spread on three vegan corn

muffins, then dumped nutritional yeast flakes onto a mountain of steamed squash. Sadly, she didn't receive my telepathic message: "Yeah, going without dinner makes me want to stock up now too!"

That afternoon I discovered why it's beneficial not to eat much. Meditation requires energy. With my body busy digesting curried broccoli, I could barely sit upright, head bobbing to stay awake.

Day 4: Persistent practice heals the body and liberates the mind. But the release process, I learned, can be brutal. My chest felt like a mule had kicked me in my heartburn. Yes, I wanted to experience nature's universal truth, but damn, this hurt.

Later that afternoon, while observing the cool sensation of air on my lips, I suddenly and mysteriously stopped feeling lonely. I felt exquisite emptiness. Love oozed from my every molecule like honey. "*I want everyone to practice Vipassana!*" And with that thought, the ecstasy disappeared. That's what I always do, I realized. The second I feel bliss, I want someone to share it with. I give my joy away, like a hot potato I can't hold onto.

Day 5: Self-awareness made me more intuitive. I noticed Girl-With-Orchid-Flip-Flops brushed her teeth after every meal, and I felt her nervous desire to be perfect. I sensed that Girl-who-Wears-Pajamas was the one who vomited earlier. I saw my roommate peek inside a door that read DO NOT ENTER, and knew that if I grabbed her by the arm and whispered, "Let's go get a beer, right now," she would have.

On Day 6, I noticed I felt much less preoccupied by other people.

Day 7: Vipassana teaches that the key to happiness is to objectively witness fluctuations as they occur, without attachment or rejection. There are no positives or negatives. All feeling leads to liberation. I was in the meditation hall, diligently breathing, when I heard the words, "*There's nothing inside you that can hurt you.*" It felt as though I'd entered a secret room deep inside my heart. I sensed that it stretched forever.

On Day 8, I was dying to write. I imagined light radiating from a golden keyboard as I typed the most adoring letters to everyone I know. Then I realized, writing anything now would distract me from knowing myself. And I remembered my breath.

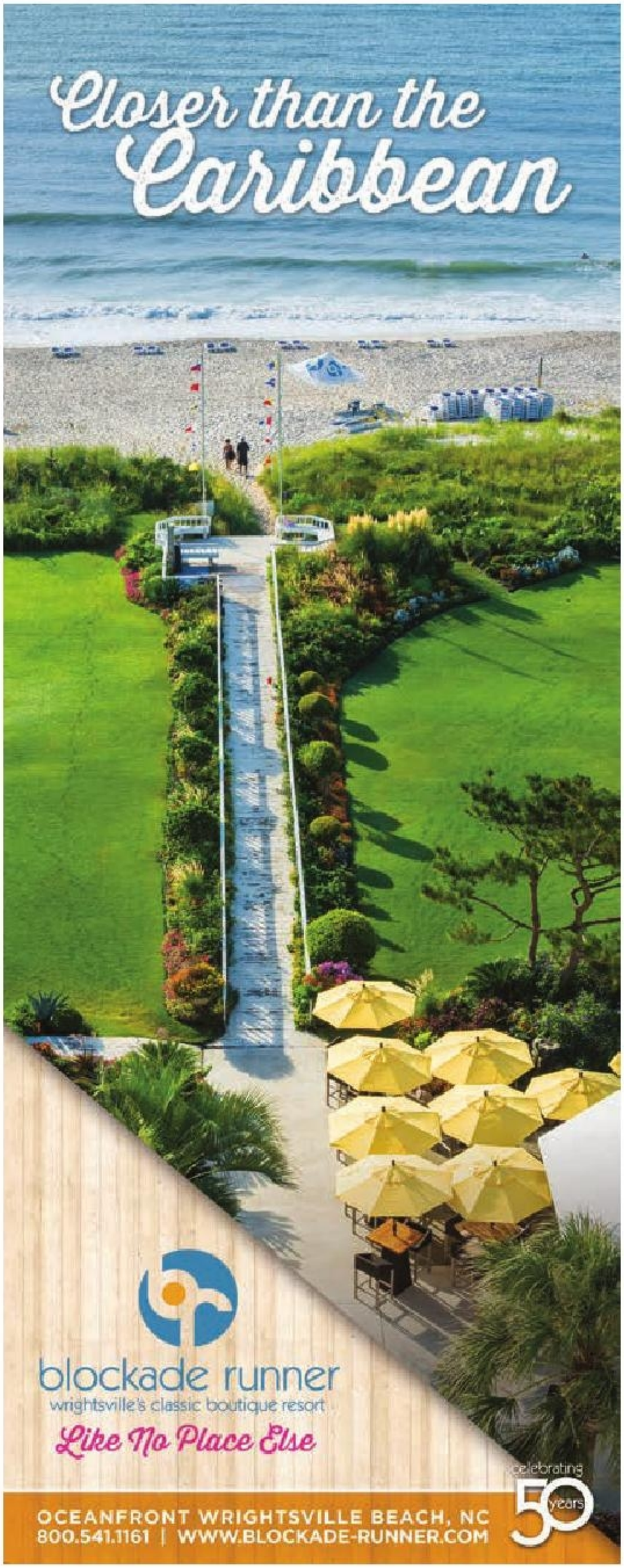
Day 9: I watched a dazzling green gecko balance himself on a tiny branch, and felt calm.

On Day 10, I saw the moment my 3-year-old self had her first spiritual thought. Observing my devastated mother slumped helplessly on the floor, I thought, "*Why doesn't she love herself?*" I remembered being that little girl who didn't know how to use a can opener or turn on the stove. But somehow she knew her baby sister was hungry and somehow she served SpaghettiOs that night. Then I thought, "*A 3-year-old can't do those things.*" And the vision stopped.

Yet, I knew it was true.

The truth — about that day, about my entire experience in Georgia, feels like a bar of soap in the rain. It slips away again and again. Yet when I stop trying to grasp it, there it is, waiting patiently for me. It takes only seconds to go from lost to loved. I'm not sure I reached enlightenment in ten days, but I watched the truth get smaller and smaller, simpler and simpler, until I felt clean, reborn. And without even speaking to anyone. Like magic.

Jennifer Chapis is an energy healer specializing in relationships. She leads workshops in meditation and writing for healing. Her writing has appeared in The New Yorker *and* McSweeney's. *Find her at jennifer@allovehealing.com.*



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Sanderling

Like wind-up toys in the surf, these are the most recognizable shorebirds on our coast

By Susan Campbell

There they go, like little wind-up toys, running back and forth along the surf as fast as their little legs will take them.

Adorable.

Sanderlings are perhaps the most recognizable shorebirds along our coast. No bigger than sparrows, these tiny sandpipers feed on small shrimp and other crustaceans exposed by the retreating waves. Although more numerous during winter months, small groups of non-breeding sanderlings are here all summer. They typically nest in the high Arctic, where their mottled bodies blend with the gravel and scrubby ground cover. Given the short breeding season, sanderling pairs may raise two broods simultaneously with each adult caring for separate nests.

In fall, birds move southward to spend the cooler months along outer beaches of the United States, through Central America almost to the southern tip of South America. Migratory flocks can number in the hundreds, but individual sanderlings may stray inland and be found at the muddy edges of large lakes. They may also be mixed in with flocks of other small shorebirds such as dunlin, semipalmated or least sandpipers.

Here in North Carolina, the birds' gray and white plumage camouflages them well along the shoreline where they can be found loafing the high tide line or scampering along the wet sand after their next meal. They repeatedly dig in the top layer of the sand for worms, crabs and shrimp with their short but sensitive black bills. Males frequently defend winter feeding territories, often in the same area from year to year. Those patches of beach tend to contract as food density increases. Furthermore, not surprisingly, conflicts intensify when food is abundant. Distinctive "twee" calls signal disagreements between birds. In flight they may also utter a variety of hisses, croaks and churrs when excited.

Foraging can be problematic in historic areas where naturally occurring sand is covered by dredged material as part of beach re-nourishment activities. Dredge spoil tends to be made up of muddy material which does not support the same invertebrate community. Smaller particle sizes, as well as the different chemical composition, change the nature of the microclimate significantly.

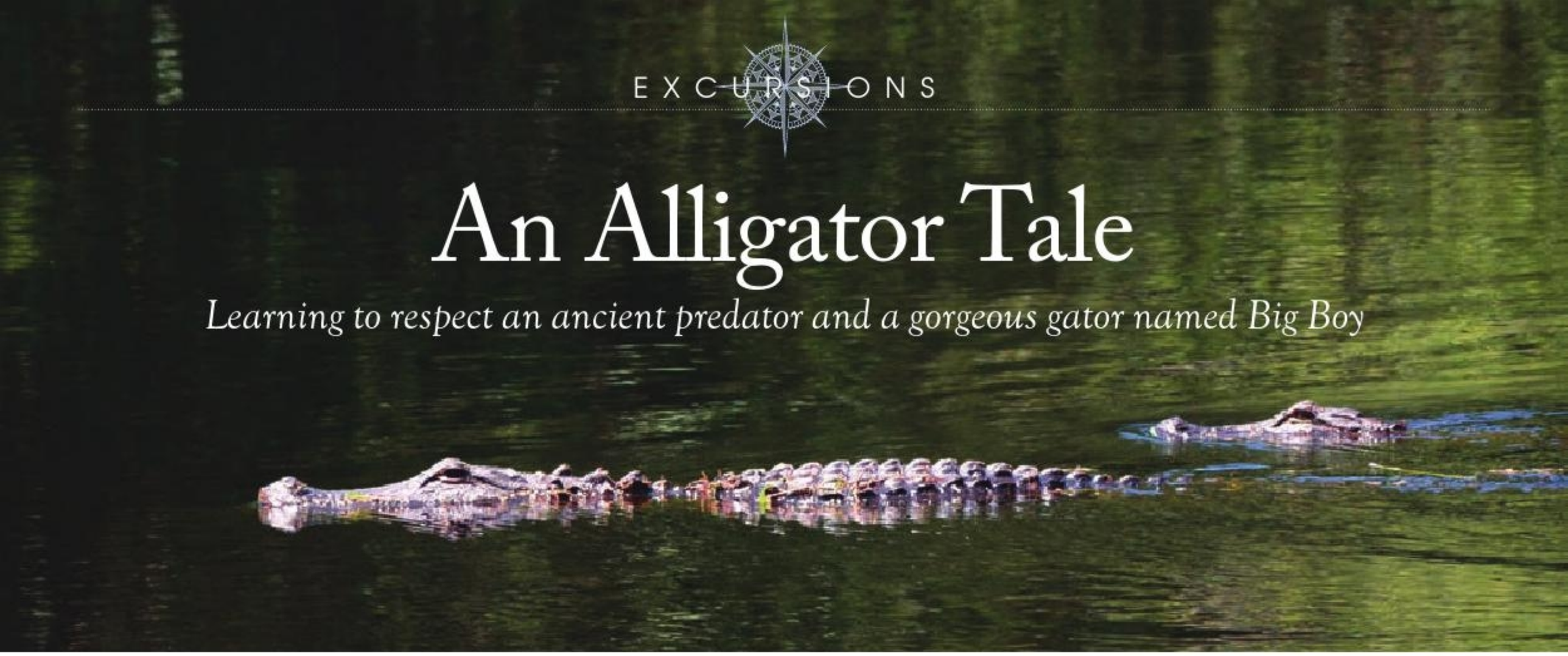
Also, in areas with human activity, birds can be stressed by excessive disturbance. Just people walking the beach will displace hungry sanderlings. Territories can be affected when the birds' behavior is modified too frequently. Migrants have a limited time to replenish their energy reserves on their long journey. For both these hungry visitors as well as juvenile birds that arrive in late fall, finding food is very important. Although sanderlings are normally very active birds, excessive flight can affect their ability to survive.

Fortunately, in North Carolina, we have plenty of shoreline for these little birds to take advantage of. But we also have more and more people visiting our beaches each year. So if you find yourself sharing a beach or mud flat with a group of sanderlings, it is best to keep your dog on a leash and give the little shorebirds a wide berth. They will, no doubt, appreciate it.

Susan would love to receive your wildlife sightings and photos. She can be contacted by email at susan@ncaves.com, or by calling (910) 949-3207.

An Alligator Tale

Learning to respect an ancient predator and a gorgeous gator named Big Boy



By Virginia Holman

To watch an alligator bask in the sun is a form of time travel. Indeed, the American alligator has changed little since the Triassic period. Its prehistoric armored hide is a fearsome mantle of spikes and scutes and scales. An alligator's enormous head, thick long body, and fat legs make it appear slow and ungainly. Yet the American alligator is anything but clumsy. On land, an alligator can move with alarming speed over short distances, and when in the water, it's elegant in its stealth. An alligator can float so its full length is exposed above water, or it may hover as if suspended, so that only the tip of its snout or perhaps its eyes are visible. The first time I witnessed a floating alligator vanish from sight — as if it had suddenly dissolved — I was enchanted. Two heartbeats later, I became concerned. How could such a colossus quietly and completely disappear from view? Where would it resurface? Was I still visible to the submerged alligator? I stepped away from the water's edge.

Recently, I was frightened by a local alligator my husband calls Big Boy. I know better than to ever be within striking distance of any alligator, particularly this eight-foot-long, 400-pound beast. My husband and I see the alligator frequently, often on the far side of a pond we like to bird. To be fair, I scared the bejeebers out of Big Boy first, then he scared me.

The incident was due to human error. The man and I had grown a bit cavalier during our pond walks. That day I assumed my husband had seen the alligator at a safe distance, and he assumed I had located it. So we both kept tramping our merry way down the narrowing path. I lagged a bit, distracted, occupied with checking the light meter on my camera. Then he stopped, put a finger to his lips, and pointed toward the water. Reader, perhaps you too would fail to take this gesture to mean, "Beware, there is an eight-foot alligator directly in front of me." Granted, we did not have a prearranged "gator warning," but doesn't an apex predator warning require the waving of arms or at least a gesture that implies, "halt"? Because my husband did neither of these things, I reckoned he was telling me to venture closer. I imagined that the shy green heron I'd been stalking for weeks was near shore. I hurried forward, excited, telephoto lens at the ready. All at once there was a spectacular crash as Big Boy scrambled from the reeds along the bank and hurled himself into the water. I cursed in a most unladylike fashion as I fled back up the path.

After a brief heated exchange (redacted), I regained my composure. I was grateful the alligator was as afraid of me as I was of it, and despite (or perhaps due to) this unpleasant close encounter, my curiosity was piqued. I went back to the pond over several weeks to watch Big Boy. The more I observed him bask, hunt for fish, and allow wading birds to walk inches from his skull with impunity, the more I understood how spectacularly ignorant I was about this ancient predator.

So I signed up for a daylong alligator workshop put on by the City of Wilmington's Halyburton Park and taught by North Carolina Wildlife Resource Commission's Coastal Outreach Educational Specialist, Mike Campbell.

Mike was an excellent instructor. During our classroom time I learned that although alligators are terrific apex predators, they are generally quite shy and fearful of humans. In this way, the natural order of things tends to protect both man and beast. However, when humans feed, harass or destroy alligators' natural habitats, alligators will become bold. Once acclimated to regular human interaction, they may become "nuisances" that stray into "humans' territory" or associate humans with food, a situation dangerous for alligators and humans alike.

I learned that the best time to view alligators basking on shore is during the spring and fall, when nights are cool and days warm. Alligators can live in fresh or brackish water, but can't tolerate salt water for long periods of time, due to their lack of salt glands. I learned that during the summer, male alligators attract a mate by bellowing until their body vibrates so violently that it causes the water around them to dance. I learned that alligators mate in the spring, and engage in extended courtship dances. In June, the females build their nests out of mud, sticks, leaves and other decaying vegetation. Each nest has about thirty to fifty eggs. As the vegetation decays, it generates heat, which incubates the eggs. If the eggs are 86 degrees or cooler, the hatchlings will be female. If the eggs are 90 degrees or warmer, the hatchlings will be male. Each baby alligator chirps inside the egg to alert the mother to excavate the nest. The alligators then use a small egg tooth

PHOTOGRAPHS BY VIRGINIA HOLMAN

to emerge. The hatchlings have a high mortality rate, approaching 80 percent, largely due to predation from raccoons, foxes, and birds. Those that do survive stay with the mother for a year or two. I was surprised to learn that alligators don't reach sexual maturity at any particular age. Instead, maturity is determined by length. When an alligator is six feet or longer, it is mature. I learned that alligators are generally not aggressive toward humans, but if you crouch down and present a low profile at the water's edge, an alligator can mistake you for prey. For this reason, it is always best to keep pets and children away from watery areas where alligators are known to dwell. I also learned that it is illegal to feed, harass or otherwise disturb an alligator, and all alligator removal must be initiated and supervised by a state wildlife biologist.

Then we left the classroom, and hit the field to go see alligators. First, Mike had us run through a quick test where we tried to eyeball the distance between two pencils he'd set out in a field. He set out ten sets of pencils. Some were ten feet away, some twenty, some thirty or farther. Each set was arranged at a different angle. I teamed up with Carla Edwards, a ranger at Carolina Beach State Park, and we submitted our estimates. It quickly became apparent that it was very difficult to identify the distance by sight. Distances measured at four feet long Carla and I estimated were two feet in length. Distances that were three feet long we estimated at six or seven. It was a humbling moment to realize our best guesses were so unreliable. I wondered, was Big Boy really eight feet? Was he ten? Twelve?

"One way to estimate an alligator's length is by looking at its head," Mike told our group. He instructed us to estimate the distance between the midpoint between an alligator's eyes and the midpoint between its nostrils, and then convert inches to feet. An alligator that has seven inches between eyes and snout is approximately seven feet. I made a note to use this the next time I saw Big Boy.

Then we drove to Lake Waccamaw State Park to view alligators. Lake Waccamaw is a shallow lake with many ponds and shallow canals along the roads. I was amazed at the number of alligators in the area. We counted twenty-eight during our three-hour tour. Mike pointed out a group of young alligators on a shady bank. At first, no one could see them. The youngest alligators were so well camouflaged by the yellow stripes that band their bodies and tails that they were nearly invisible in the dappled light. The canals were full of bright green duckweed, and yellow-bellied sliders lined up on sunny logs like dishes balanced on a waiter's arm I stopped to photograph the turtles. Only then did I see three juvenile alligators floating in the water a mere ten feet away. The more our group explored the area, the more we saw. Someone would point out an alligator, or a stick that looked like an alligator, or a turtle head that turned out to be an alligator's eye. It was exciting and unnerving.

Later that week my husband and I headed back along our favorite birding trail. We located Big Boy about one hundred feet away. His tail rested on the bank, and his enormous head bobbed on the water. He turned his head when he heard us. My husband is the scientist in the family, so I asked him to use Mike Campbell's estimation formula to get a better idea of Big Boy's length. "Ten feet?" he conjectured. Maybe. One thing I do know for sure: I will never scare Big Boy again.

Want to learn more about alligators?

North Carolina Aquarium at Fort Fisher runs regular alligator education programs. The aquarium also houses Luna, an albino alligator. Info: (910) 458-8257 or www.ncaquariums.com/fort-fisher.

Other organizations that routinely offer alligator workshops include:

Lake Waccamaw State Park, 1866 State Park Drive, Lake Waccamaw, North Carolina
Info: (910) 646-4748; (910) 646-1843 or lake.waccamaw@ncparks.gov

North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission
Info: www.ncwildlife.org

Author Virginia Holman teaches in the creative writing department at UNC Wilmington. She is also an ACA certified Level 3 coastal kayak instructor and guides part time with Kayak Carolina.

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Crabbing

My chore, a child on a boat,
Was to hold unforgiving
In spider-like hands
A wooden ruler, wooden
So it would float
Should I drop it over the side
And, having no other standard
To judge them by, the coastal patrol
Would hold us immeasurable
For illegal possessions.

How all day crabs could be fooled
As strung pieces of meat
Swung from our boat
Like the real heart of darkness
Or some crazed Chicken Little
Too horrible for telling.
I stood measuring up
The brown basket's filling.

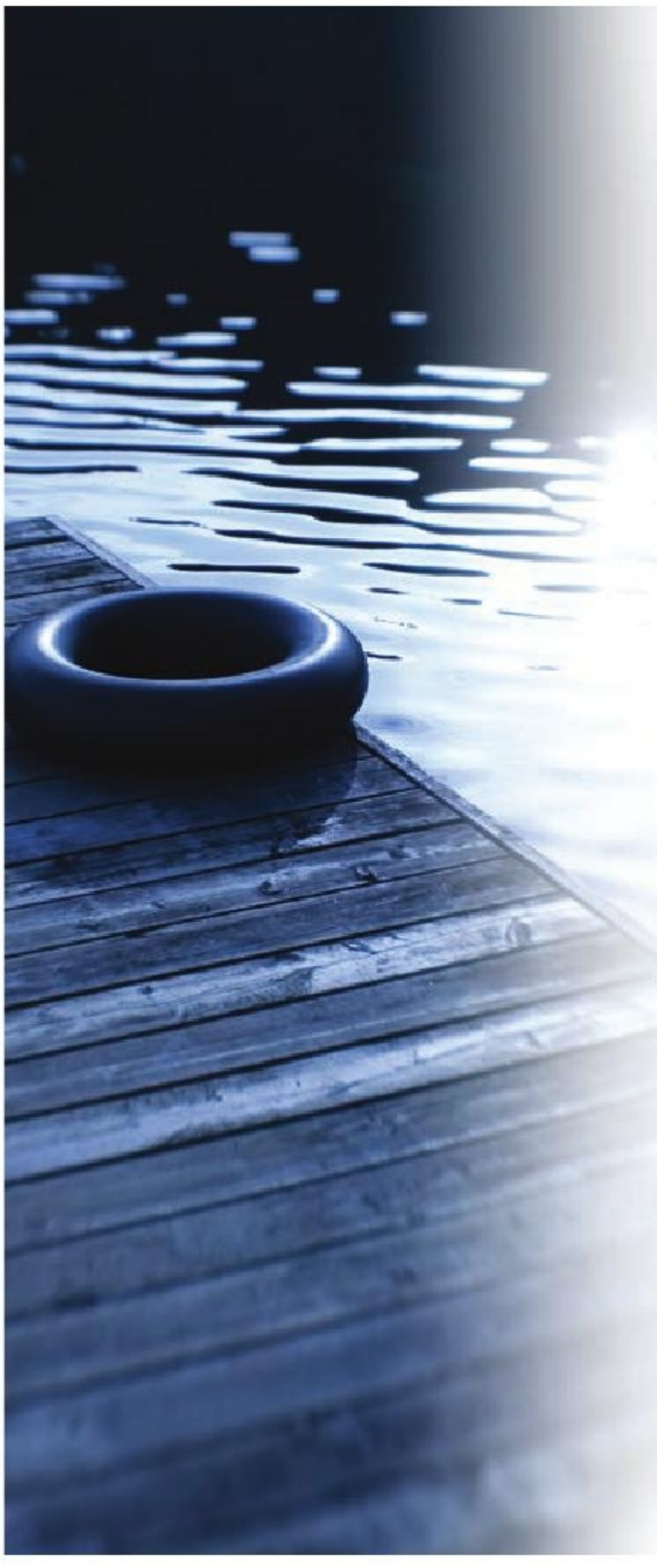
By evening, with hungers worked keen
In salt air and Old Bay Seasoning,
We legally feasted
On dozens of crabs 5 inches or longer,
And night came slowly,
Rippling the waters
Like a Venetian blind so carefully closed
You didn't first notice the closing . . .

I do not now know
What size I need be
To be measured for death
And its odd in-betweens —
Whether it will be a joy
To be thrown back rough, cold,
Into the unforgiveness of oceans,
Or more a joy
To finally behold the flame
With the pot for the boiling.

— *Bob Wickless*

The Fragrance of a Different Life

By Anthony S. Abbott



It begins, of course, with the ocean — the Jersey Shore, the Grand Strand, Big Sur, Malibu and the thousands of less famous beaches where we all went and continue to go for a week or month as the case may be. It begins with the waves coming in and us as children or adults riding the waves, churning through the foam to the gravelly sand on the shore.

How I loved the beach as a boy, loved riding those waves. How I loved making sand castles and watching the waves come in, bit by bit, inch by inch, until they swallowed up our best handiwork. I made these works of art first of all for myself and then for my niece and nephew and later for my children and later still for my grandchildren. Sometimes we waited to watch the waves wash over them, and sometimes we left when we finished our work so that we wouldn't have to see the destruction.

For me, the summer was the most complex time of year. I started boarding school in the fourth grade, and often would go to the beach for a few days with my grandparents or a school friend before settling in for the vast reaches of June, July and August. The question was where? And with whom? I just went where I was sent. At 12 I flew across the country by myself, braving summer thunderstorms in a series of D-6s, to spend the summer with my father and his second family in California. It was not particularly successful, and the following summer I begged my godmother, Marion Lowe, to let me stay with her at her ranch in Santa Cruz, California. She consented, and this time I crossed the country by train rather than risking the terrors of the sky. The train was wonderful. Closed in the Pullman car's lower berth, I could raise the shade and watch the mysterious mountains and rivers, cities and towns, slide past in the starlit darkness of the night.

Two summers later I went back to California to work as a camp counselor, this time on the Greyhound bus, because I had to pay for the trip myself, and I remember arriving in San Francisco, pale and thin like Banquo's ghost, because I had not saved enough money to feed myself properly on the way. One of my favorite summers was the one after my senior year in prep school, when I worked for the Pennsylvania State Highway Department and stayed in the home of a friend, who taught me how to drive and how to smoke. How we all smoked then, and how we loved it, cradling the cigarettes between our index and middle fingers, trying to take the tip of the cigarette into our mouths with the casualness of Cary Grant or Humphrey Bogart.

As teachers we mark our calendars by the school year, which begins in September and ends in June, and so when we came to Davidson, North Carolina, in 1964, as a family of five, the question still remained — what will you do this summer? Our solution was to buy property on nearby Lake Norman, a huge artificial lake built by the Duke Power Co. And so every summer, when school was out, we moved the family from Davidson all of eleven miles to Lake Norman, where we swam and fished and waterskied and lived side by side with two other families whose children were the same age. Now, fifty years later, we live in our local retirement community, The Pines at Davidson, but when school is out we still move back to the lake for the summer and continue to enjoy our dear friends on either side of us. The children and grandchildren come back to visit, and the neighbor across the cove, who taught some of us to waterski in the 1960s, is now teaching the grandchildren.

Summer has always been special — a time to smell the fragrance of a different life. And my three sons seem to have inherited that feeling. Two of them are teachers, and we all savor that moment when the last class is over, the last exam taken or graded, the last faculty meeting attended — a moment when we can stop and breathe and feel the lake or the ocean or the mountain air, something entirely different from the classroom and the college campus. And after Labor Day, when a few yellow maple leaves begin to fall, we come back to our teaching and our studies refreshed and renewed by the magic of one more summer. I am thankful for that.

Anthony S. Abbott served as president of the North Carolina Poetry Society from 2009–2011. His newest book of poems, The Angel Dialogues, *was released in March 2014.*

The Grandstand

By Clyde Edgerton

When I think of childhood summers, I see the baseball field and grandstand on the school near my boyhood home. No fence stood around the field. My friends and I used it at will. I remember fences around nothing but dog pens, chicken pens and pastures.

But there were plenty of invisible fences. No black child would have dared walk through the invisible fence around that ball field or the one around our church or school. But we — my four or five main buddies and I — were carefree. (Mind you, I'm not writing here about a romantic, hazy-lazy summer boyhood thing: one friend's daddy regularly beat him with a belt; another was often hungry and sometimes uncared for — his parents were bad to drink.)

But back to baseball.

I recall ball field sweat, sunburn, dirt and game suspense — with brief spells sitting in the shade of the ancient, covered, wooden grandstand that stood behind home plate. I recall no regulation bases (we used boards, cardboard or discarded shirts), no adult supervision and no uniforms.

We did have a pitcher's mound with a rubber ("pitcher's plate") that was occasionally replaced after almost wearing away (high school ball was played on the field until 1958 when a consolidated high school was built in a nearby community).

Left field was relatively shallow. You could hit a home run over the left fielder's head and into a deep gully that ran from left to center. If you hit the ball over the right fielder's head, the ball would roll eternally — and on until it came up behind you.

I remember regularly driving a car across the outfield once I was about 12 (there was a dirt road and a cart path from my house to the ball field). In the open car trunk would be a barrel of trash for me to empty in the community trash dump. It was in that left-field gully. Surely my mother saw the unbridled glee in my eyes when she handed me the car keys. Crafton Mitchell and I, setting off fireworks, once caught the dump on fire.

The grandstand served as our backstop — since we never had enough players for a catcher. It was a wooden structure about a story high, maybe four car-widths wide and just as deep. Chicken wire extended across the open front. If you could have looked down from the sky, you'd see that the entire infield appeared to be placed in a deep horse-hoof print in the sand. The highest bank stood behind home plate — slanting upward under the grandstand floor — the grandstand having been built up the slant of the high bank.

The floor of the grandstand was composed of giant wooden "steps," each wide enough to sit on comfortably and tall enough to lean back against — not "open" like today's bleacher stands.

The character of our spot on earth, the soul of the enterprise, rested in that grandstand, the structure.

When I was 7, Crafton Mitchell and I, exploring the neighborhood, found a half pack of Lucky Strike cigarettes on one of those big steps. We were old enough to know what we shouldn't do — but, alone, at the grandstand, we looked at each other and realized . . . realized what we had to do. Crafton walked home for matches while I stood guard. We lost our clear-lung virginity that afternoon. At the grandstand.

What all else was gained and lost inside, beneath, and behind that grandstand — from glasses to coats to other treasures — I will never know nor measure. (I only heard stories, of course.) I do know it was cool under the grandstand, especially if a breeze blew across the shaded red clay.

I remember cheering from the grandstand during high school baseball games and church softball games. I remember watching field events, a donkey baseball game, hobby airplane flying, pickup football games in the outfield.

One day at a church field-day footrace, Gideon Powers, a church elder, stood at the end of a makeshift racetrack (a group of us 6-year-old boys started on the third base line and raced to a chalk line drawn between first and second base). At the race's end, he grabbed the winner, me (the only race I ever won), lifted me onto his shoulders and paraded me around the bases and along the grandstand walk-through aisle that was behind the grandstand screen. Spectators cheered. I was on top of the world — in the grandstand.

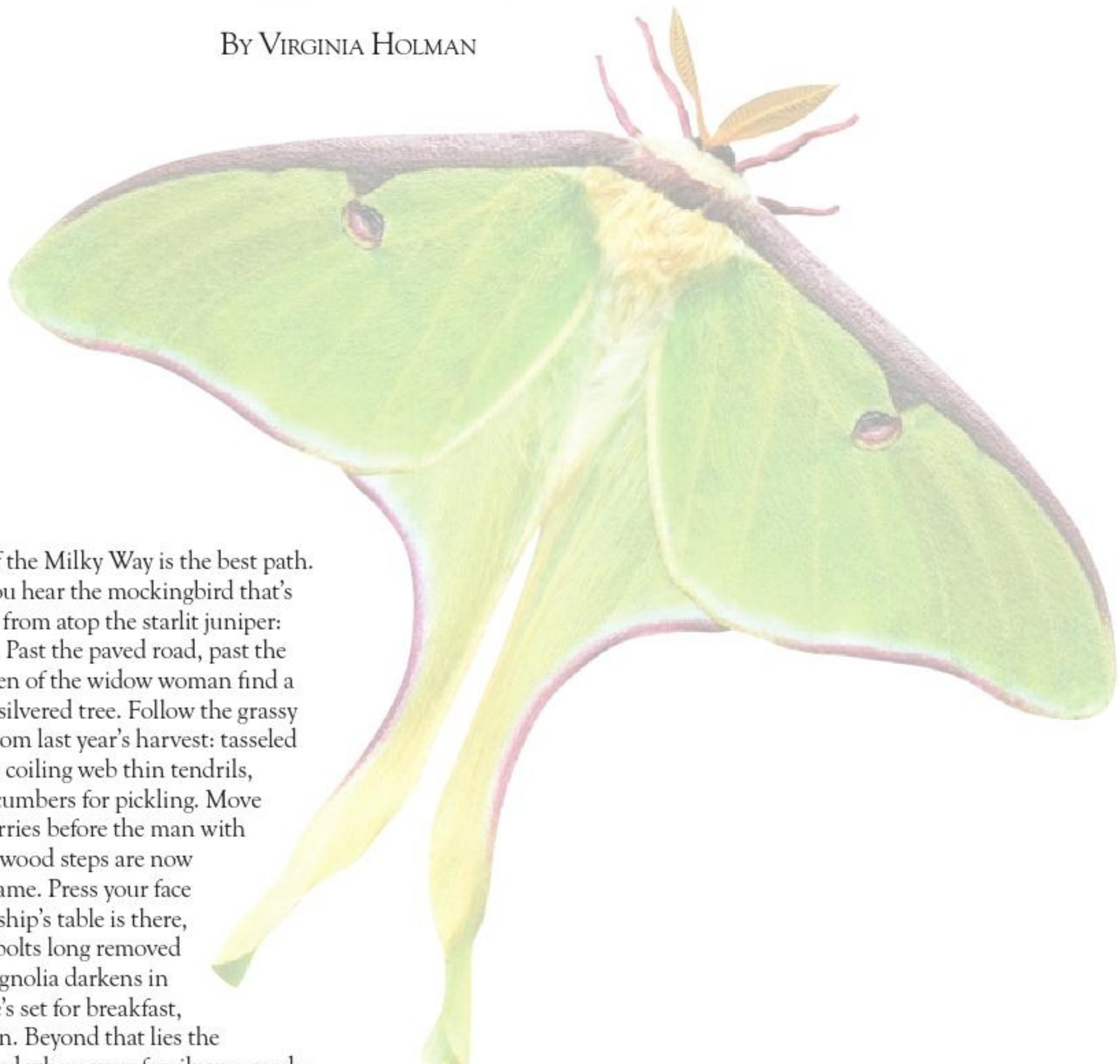
I remember Cecil Overcash, during a church softball game, turning, standing, and charging backward from his catcher position (eyes to the heavens — on a fouled pop softball), running full speed into a tall corner post of the grandstand — so hard he was knocked unconscious. They lay him on one of the big wooden steps and waited. He finally came around. The game started up again.

I'm guessing that the grandstand was a place like some of those places you remember. Pick up a pen. Talk into your cell phone recorder, if you must, but, please, see that your grandstands and swimming holes stay alive in the stories and memories of those who love you, that they stay alive after your mind — their current keeper — is no more.

Clyde Edgerton is the author of ten novels, a memoir, and a new work, Papadaddy's Book for New Fathers. *He is the Thomas S. Kenan III Distinguished Professor of Creative Writing at UNCW.*

Luna Moth

By Virginia Holman



The shadow of the Milky Way is the best path. You'll know you're close when you hear the mockingbird that's switched day for night. He'll call from atop the starlit juniper: I'm a shrike, a jay, a hawk, a frog. Past the paved road, past the shell-lined lane, past the lit kitchen of the widow woman find a creek and beside it a blank-faced silvered tree. Follow the grassy lane beside the garden planted from last year's harvest: tasseled Country Gentleman, pole beans coiling web thin tendrils, ripening Hanovers, okra and cucumbers for pickling. Move the box turtles from the strawberries before the man with a bucket arrives near dawn. The wood steps are now concrete, but step light just the same. Press your face against the sour screen. The old ship's table is there, a thick scar down its center, the bolts long removed from the heavy brass base. A magnolia darkens in a hand-painted tureen. The table's set for breakfast, all the dishes turned upside down. Beyond that lies the unseen parlor, farther still, the bed where your family was made and born.

The door's not locked, it never is, but the rusting hook is set, and what better place is there than this side of the threshold, where, if you wait long enough, the day will arrive and with it your man, and the hinge in your heart will unfold as he rocks the old cane chair up on two legs, and points out — there, right in front of you — what you've missed?

Virginia Holman is the author of Rescuing Patty Hearst *(Simon & Schuster), a memoir of her late mother's untreated schizophrenia. An avid kayaker and outdoorsy type, she writes the monthly "Excursions" column for* Salt *magazine. She teaches in the department of creative writing at UNC Wilmington.*

Blasphemy

By Stephen E. Smith

The Reverend Aldridge Chandler hunkered in the airless vestry, his black velvet robe billowing about him, and placed his hands on the shoulders of my newly altered seersucker jacket. "Well," he said, "your mother's not much of a seamstress, is she?"

I didn't respond. Language had lost all meaning an hour earlier as I stood before the bedroom mirror to examine Mother's handiwork. Somehow she'd transformed the two dollar thrift shop jacket she'd purchased for me the day before into a sagging circus tent. The puckered shoulder seams fell an inch below where the upper joint of my humerus joined the scapula and sent the crooked sleeves distending downward to catch me just below my elbows. She'd managed to shorten the sleeves a full three inches more than necessary so that the cuffs of my starched dress shirt extended like stovepipes into my clammy palms. My cufflinks provided the crowning touch. Embedded in opaque amber were Caribbean sunsets pieced together from butterfly wings. My grandparents had given me the cufflinks for my birthday, and until that moment I'd thought them the height of fashion. As I studied my funhouse reflection, those two twilights dangled like cheap souvenir ashtrays at the ends of my wilted arms. I was as mortified as an 8-year-old could be.

"It's OK," Reverend Chandler said. "I think you'll make an excellent acolyte." He produced a Zippo, snapped it open, touched fire to the wick and handed me the brass candle lighter, the flame flickering tenuously as the first booming notes from the Möller pipe organ reverberated in the rafters. Then he spun me around, opened the door to the sanctuary and gave me an emphatic shove.

And there I was in front of the congregation at Saint Mark's United Methodist Church, my brain overloading on sensory stimuli — the dust motes suspended in the light funneling through the stained-glass windows, the high altar's brass cross and collection plates, the plush red carpet, the purple altar drapes — and the eyes of every member of the church focused on me. I was utterly stupefied. What the heck was I supposed to do? I cast a side glance at the congregation and spied Mother, her face crimson — whether from the August heat or embarrassment, I wasn't sure — grimacing in the front pew. She nodded toward the altar.

Oh, yeah, I had to light the candles! Stepping off solemnly on my right foot, I halted momentarily when I noticed that my left shoelace had come untied. I considered pausing to retie it, but what would I have done with the brass lighter? Instead, I shuffled cautiously to the first candle holder, touched the flame to the brass-capped wick and watched it flicker to life. As Reverend Chandler had instructed, I performed an abbreviated genuflection in front of the cross and paused before attempting to light the second candle. That's when I noticed that the flame on the lighter had gone out. How in heaven's name was I going to light the second candle?

The answer came in a burst of divine inspiration, a voice whispering in my brain: "Hey stupid, walk back to the first candle and relight the candle lighter." Of course! I staggered in front of the cross a second time, pausing to offer a cursory bow, and carefully touched the wick of the lighted candle.

Nothing. I tried a second time. No flame. I spotted the problem: The lighter wick had burned down. I pushed the extender up with my thumb, forcing the wick out to its full length — at least six inches — and touched it to the lighted candle. A flame shot heavenward like a bottle rocket, and a palpable gasp issued from the congregation. I retracted the wick, brought the conflagration under control, and strolled back to the second candle, which, praise God, lighted without incident. All I had to do was make a clean getaway.

I stepped off toward the vestry door, successfully completing four respectful strides before my shoelace twisted around my left shoe and sent me sprawling, the brass candle lighter clattering across the floor. I instantly rose to a crouched position, one foot extended, the other bent beneath me as if I were on the starting blocks for the fifty yard dash, and lurched forward just as a hand reached from the vestry to grab me by the arm. A loud tearing of cloth reverberated through the sanctuary as my newly tailored jacket ripped loose at the left shoulder seam.

For a moment, I lay flat on the vestry floor, perspiration running in rivulets down my arms, my breath coming in short shuddery jolts. And then I did it — I looked the Reverend Aldridge Chandler full in the face and blurted an involuntary profanity.

"It's well," he said, "that Jesus loves the little children."

Stephen E. Smith, our Omnivorous Reader, is the author of eight books of poetry and prose, including Selected New and Old Poems: A Short Report on the Fire at Woolworths.

Swimming Novels

By Angela Davis-Gardner

A girl and boy, each dressed in a black tank suit, mount writers' blocks at the end of a regulation length pool. The water is blue and flat, a tabula rasa of a pool. It's the swimming of novels event, no ties allowed.

The stands are hushed. Editors line the front row, craning forward with binoculars.

The girl tries out her racing dive position, curling her toes over the edge of the block and flexing her strong brown knees. A recent M.F.A. graduate, she is a tall, well-made young woman with long smooth muscles and a calm exterior. She is aware that she looks formidable, but this weakens rather than strengthens her, for she is acutely conscious of the chasm between seeming and being. Furthermore, too great a show of strength may put the crowd on her brother's side.

She glances up, looking at the far end of the pool where her father is typing, coaching by example. He has lectured her on the perils of vacillation.

The boy hikes up his suit. Still ringing in his ears is the locker room pep talk, a tape of Faulkner's Nobel acceptance. He will not only survive but endure. He already has some brilliant metaphors; all he needs is a conflict. He casts a glance at his sister. She tried suicide once; he might use that.

"On your marks, get set . . ." The swimmers crouch. The gun sounds. The boy leaps in, holding his nose. The girl stares out at a wisp of fog moving over the water's surface: pistol smoke? Miasma? In the distance there is what might be the roar of a crowd. She stares down at her own reflection, then out at her brother. He is dog-paddling back toward her, his hair plastered to his skull, a look of terror on his face.

"Go on," she shouts at him. "Get going." He tilts backward and flails his arms, his eyes still fixed on her, beseeching.

She dives, glides beneath the surface. There's a fine silence underwater. She executes a strong frog kick, pulls her arms down her sides. Maybe she'll go the whole distance like this. A pelagic habitat: She likes the sound of it. Other liquid sounding words come to mind: nesslerize, plaice. She comes even with the boy's flutter kick. Words begin to teem around her, a soup of vowels, consonants. She breaks the surface, sidestrokes beside her brother. He turns toward her and they swim together, moving dreamily toward the end.

Both coaches are at the pool's edge now, typing against each other and shouting their protégées forward. The boy's coach is trumpeting reviews of his first lap: heartrending, original. The girl's coach growls to get serious, she's behind for her age. She does a flip turn and pushes off hard. Behind her he's reciting names, Eudora, Flannery, all the early learners. She kicks harder, moving out into the silence, then turns on her back and drifts. There's no hurry. Her coach has already written out the first chapter for her; all she has to do is swim it.

The boy churns past doing the Great American Crawl. He gives her a gleeful smile as he turns his head to breathe. He's in water wings now, and flippers. Treading water, the girl looks back over her shoulder. He's younger, their mother shouts, it's only fair. Her coach shouts at her through a bullhorn: the advantages she's had, all the money spent, orthodontia, violin.

They are even on the turn, then swim side-by-side, stroke-for-stroke, in comfortable rhythm. They go on, lap after lap, sentences trailing after them. The coaches shout page counts on the turns and sieve out the words in nets. The words are dried, strained, formed into chapters, set in type. Slim volumes appear on the blocks along with publicity photographs.

The girl develops a foot cramp, her pace slows. She and the boy pass going opposite directions. It's hard to tell who's ahead or behind.

They seem to be in a different pool now, kidney shaped, like the pool at a cheap motel. The girl watches her right hand as she swims; it's wrinkling, shriveling. Her heart is shriveling; a small stone in her chest. It is growing dark. Her brother is no longer in sight. She discovers that it is impossible to cry underwater. In the distance her father is urging her to hurry, bring the story to a climax. She's been published but remaindered, he says, there's very little time.

The water begins to pick up a chop; it tastes of brine. The bottom lines are no longer visible. The bleachers have emptied, and the coaches have vanished. No one is keeping score, yet as night falls the boy and girl keep swimming, striking out into open sea.

Novelist Angela Davis-Gardner was in the first graduating class of UNC Greensboro's MFA program. In her youth, she swam thousands of miles as part of Bob Jamieson's Greensboro girls' swimming team.

The Body

By Wiley Cash

Close your eyes for a moment and find yourself standing in the yard of the house you grew up in. It's early summer and not quite hot this late in the day. The soft light of fireflies has begun to lift from the high grass around the porch.

There are things you can hear in the distance: the muffled bounce of a basketball on the pavement up the street; the piercing but somehow comforting whine of an electric saw that echoes from a neighbor's garage.

A sprinkler runs in the yard next door, the soft spray of water carrying itself across the grass; the smell of freshly cut blades mingles with that of the damp earth beneath. The sprinkler mists the road, and there is the smell of sun-warmed cement being cooled.

You're not quite old enough to have a job, but you're old enough to be at home alone. Because of this there is a range of possibilities that seem limitless; you're confined only by your imagination or how long you're willing to wait for something — anything — to happen.

But then you hear it: the crunch of bike tires on the road behind you; the squeal of brakes before a foot comes off the pedal; the voice that calls your name.

John Warner's 15, too old to be sitting on his bike in front of your house, calling your name and staring at you. You're not so much afraid of him as you are wary of him. He's alone, which is good, because you're more afraid of his friend: Jerry Kistler. There was the time you left your skateboard near the mailbox and went inside for a drink, and when you came back out Jerry Kistler was sitting on his bike with your skateboard tucked under his arm. John Warner sat on his own bike beside him. It seemed as if Kistler were waiting for you so you could see him with your skateboard, and then the two of them rode away. John Warner had looked back at you and smiled. You're thinking about that smile now as John calls your name again.

"What do you want?" you ask, your voice higher and tighter than it would be if John were one of your friends.

"I want to show you something," he says.

"What?"

"I can't tell you." He spits something out and rubs it into the asphalt with his shoe. "You have to come see it."

"My parents aren't home," you say. "I can't leave the yard."

He laughs at this, and you feel your face turning red, your ears growing warm.

"It won't take but a second," he says. He turns his bike to face down the street. Your garage door is open, and your bike leans against the wall inside. John nods toward your bike. "Follow me."

Before you know it you're on your bike following John Warner through your neighborhood, praying that he doesn't cross Union Road, the only place where you know for certain you're not allowed to go. But he turns right just before the road dead-ends at the elementary school, and you follow him down the nature trail behind the baseball field.

When you catch up to him you find he's left his bike lying on its side, and he's standing atop a culvert at the edge of the trail. "Look," he says, pointing into the culvert.

You leave your bike beside his and walk over to him, fearing what you're about to see or what he could do with the two of you out here alone, the sun sinking behind the trees, the light fading.

"Look," he says again.

In the culvert, just a few yards below, are the bones of some small animal. Little tufts of orange-brown fur are caught in the dry, dead leaves around it.

"What do you think it was?" John asks.

At first you think it was a cat, but it seems that John is asking you a question to which he already knows the answer, and you're afraid of being wrong. "I don't know," you say.

"I think it might be my cat," he says. "I've been looking for her." And something about how he says it makes you believe it is. "Jerry told me cats go off to die alone when they're sick, and that I'd probably never find her."

It's grown darker while the two of you have been standing there, making the bones even harder to see. "I don't think it's a cat," you say.

"Really?" John says.

"It's too small."

"You think we should bury it?" But he turns away before you can answer, and you hear him pick up his bike and push it up the trail. "I'm going to get a shovel," he says. "Wait here."

And it's not until he's gone that you realize he was crying.

Wiley Cash is a New York Times *best-selling author whose second novel,* This Dark Road to Mercy, *was released in January 2014. He lives in Wilmington.*

Back Then

By Lee Smith

Back then, summer stretched out before us like another country, ours to plunder and explore. "Summertime" was literally different, another kind of time — longer, larger. It belonged to us alone. In that rough remote corner of southwest Virginia where I grew up, the landscape was pretty much perpendicular and the roads were pretty scarce. But I always felt comforted by the ring of mountains which nestled our little town "like a play-pretty cotched in the hand of God," as my Aunt Kate always described it.

Once school was out, we threw down our books and ran those mountains ridge to ridge like little animals, me and my cousins and the other kids in Cowtown, as our stretch of Route 460 was called, enjoying a kind of freedom which would be hard to imagine today — climbing trees and cliffs, playing in caves, swinging on grapevines, catching salamanders, damming up the creek, building lean-tos and lookouts, playing Indians and settlers with our homemade slingshots or the occasional Christmas bow-and-arrow set. We formed dozens of clubs, each with its own secret handshake and code words and initiation. We'd stay up in the mountains until they rang the big bell to call us home.

Back then I ate supper with everybody. Martha Sue Owens was my best friend and her mother made the best cream gravy and cornbread, my favorite, but the sophisticated Trivetts ate the most exotic things, such as lasagna and chop suey, which the rest of us had never heard of. I learned to swim in their backyard pool.

Back then we didn't have camps or lessons or any organized activities except a week of Vacation Bible School, where we made lanyards and drank red Kool-Aid and ate Lorna Doone cookies and sang "Red and yellow, black and white, they are precious in His sight, Jesus loves the little children of the world," though we had never seen any of those other ones.

Back then I spent a lot of time in my own backyard sitting under a giant cluster of forsythia bushes that I called the "dogbushes" because I took an endless series of family dogs under there with me — my Pekingese Missy and our boxer, Queenie, come to mind — along with an entire town filled with imaginary friends. My two best friends in that dogbush town were Sylvia and Vienna. Vienna was named for my favorite food, the Vienna sausages in the nice flat cans that I used to take under there to eat, along with some of those little cellophane packets of saltine crackers. My friend Vienna was very beautiful, with long curly red hair. But my friend Sylvia could fly, something I aspired to.

I often took the steep path down the riverbank to my "wading house," the understory of a willow tree half in and half out of the water. The wading house was home to many animal friends such as a young lizard named Jerry (because I couldn't tell if it was a boy lizard or a girl lizard, and Jerrys can go either way), old Grandfather Turtle and his three silly granddaughters, a baby watersnake named Oliver, and a huge family of busy brown bugs.

We weren't supposed to wade or swim when the river ran black with the coal they were washing upstream. But once Martha Sue and I made rafts out of boards tied onto innertubes and floated away to Kentucky, where we planned to become racehorse riders. We floated down the river around the bend and under the Hoot Owl bridge, past the hospital and the depot, all the way to town where our trip was cut short behind my daddy's dimestore. Here we were greeted by a sizable crowd including my daddy himself, alerted by enemy spies. We were quickly returned dripping wet to our worried mothers for a spanking.

I think I was lucky to grow up back then in those long lazy summertimes that stretched our souls and our imaginations, with mountains and trees and animals for friends, back then when the word "twitter" meant only birdsong.

Lee Smith has published thirteen novels and four collections of short stories. She is the recipient of numerous literary awards, including the N.C. Award for Literature. Her newest novel is Guests on Earth.

Benji's Mother

By Ruth Moose

The first and only time I ever met Benji's mother she accused me of murder. Her eyes black onyx, her hair loose and wild, she screamed, "You tried to kill my child."

Stunned, I just stood there, shaking. For the last six weeks, Benji, her son, had come every day to play with my son. Benji would appear at my back door as soon as Captain Kangaroo went off the TV, asking if Lyle, my 5-year-old, could come out to play.

The two boys played well together, never arguing, not even mock wrestling or fighting. They played in our backyard on swings, a sandbox, the treehouse/fort my husband had built. In and out, they had Kool-Aid, graham crackers, cheese, snack kinds of things. Sometimes I fed Benji lunch if he lingered long after I called Lyle in.

One of my house rules was Quiet Time. After lunch every day, my son had to go to his room to read or nap or play quietly. Alone. Two peaceful, quiet hours. No playmates. Often he napped. And so did I. Survival mode. After lunch, I explained to Benji about Quiet Time and that he had to go home. He seemed to accept this and, head down, slowly left. For some reason I felt a bit guilty. Especially after the day I found him sitting on our front steps where he'd been the whole time. Waiting. Two quiet hours.

Always in clean jeans or camp shorts and T-shirts, though rumpled and scruffy, Benji wore an air of sadness. I don't remember ever seeing him smile. He was a good kid, shared, never raised his voice nor asked for anything, not even a drink of water.

Busy with a new baby, I'd been grateful for Lyle to have a pleasant playmate and Benji seemed a sweet child, absolutely no trouble.

Once when I had some errand and Benji was there, I drove him home. I was also a bit curious. Two streets up, the house was like others in the development, brick, front porch stoop, back screen porch, large, but bare, lawns, front and back. Good level playing areas but no swings, no trampoline, nothing. The grass was mowed, but shrubbery, straggly, untrimmed, reached the tightly shuttered windows.

I'd asked neighbors about Benji when he first came to play. No one knew much. Only that his mother sent him and his older sister out to play, locked her doors. They weren't allowed back in until dark. Or maybe a thunderstorm. What did she do all day in that locked house? No one knew. Alcohol? That was a guess. Hooked on soaps? Another guess. Few had ever seen "hide nor hair of her," they said. The father? Word was he traveled, gone weeks at a time.

The day I met Benji's mother was one of those rare, rainy days in summer. Not hard rain, but enough so kids had to play inside.

Benji had been there, as he was most mornings. He and my son had played board games, done puzzles and I'd brought out some coloring books, magic paint books, brushes, a toy teacup of water. The boys played until lunch time, then Benji went home. I hadn't gotten the peanut butter sandwiches on the table when someone blam, blam, blammed my back screen door, barged in my kitchen. Barged in! Scared me.

Startled, I turned around, saw Benji being held by the scruff of his T-shirt and a woman wild with rage, screaming "What have you done to my son?"

"Nothing." The boys had played well. Peaceful.

"What did you feed him? You tried to poison him," she screamed, still holding the hapless child like a small, scared animal.

Benji looked pale, helpless.

"Nothing," I repeated. Tried to think what they'd had for snacks. Maybe a cereal bar. Did it have nuts? He was allergic to nuts?

"Look at his mouth," she jerked Benji around, yanked open his mouth. "Stick out your tongue."

Benji's tongue was black.

"Look," she said. "It's black. His tongue is black. You tried to kill him."

I was puzzled. Nothing I'd fed him would have caused his tongue to go black.

I called my son into the room. "Let me see your tongue."

Lyle looked puzzled but poked out his tongue, his eyes asking if I was going to take his temperature or was he going to the doctor. His tongue was pink, normal.

Really puzzled now I said, "Let's go to your room."

Benji's mother followed, having finally let go the scuff of his T-shirt.

"Show me what you were playing, " I said.

The play table with two chairs had puzzles and games and on top them, open, lay the two Magic Paint books, pages damp and limp. I picked up one of the brushes. Wet, too.

"We painted," my son said. "Lots of pages."

"Show me," I said.

He picked up a brush, dipped it in the water, flipped to a new page and began to paint. Colors appeared. Red, blue, purple. No black.

Benji picked up a brush, put it in his mouth to wet it, started toward the page.

"Wait," I said. "Is this how you did all your pages?"

He nodded.

His mother stepped back from looking over his shoulder, hands still on her hips."Is it poison?" Her voice was lower now, but still had an edge. "I bet it's poison."

I picked up one of the books, read on the back cover in very small print, "Safe. Only water required to make the colors appear." I pointed, showed her, watched her read it.

Mystery solved. She took her hands off her hips and we went back to the kitchen. Benji followed her out the door.

I never saw either of them again.

Ruth Moose, author of three books of short stories and six collections of poetry, taught creative writing at UNC-Chapel Hill for fifteen years. Her first novel, Doing it at the Dixie Dew, *won the Malice Domestic Prize and was published by St. Martin's Press in May, 2014.*

The Mysterious Indoors

By Dana Sachs

It was August 1979 and the Memphis heat was a monster. My friends Laura and Kathy and I didn't emerge from the air conditioning until 10 at night, when the city turned soft and amiable, easy on the skin and full of promise. For three or four hours, we would roam the bars of Midtown, listening to the bands we loved, dancing until our hair clumped with sweat behind our ears, until our bare feet turned black from dirty floors, subsisting on Tic Tacs and water. When the lights came on after a show, we dug around under tables to find the tortuous pumps that we had bought — optimistically and at fifty cents a pair — from St. Vincent de Paul or Salvation Army.

We had known each other all our lives. Laura and I were about to start our senior year of high school; Kathy was heading off to college. Insatiable and fearless, they refused to go home until dawn. I was the sleepy, shy one. I trailed them in the crucial experiences of life (love and sex, namely), but felt too meek to catch up. Usually, they dropped me off at home at 2 a.m. before dashing off to a new adventure.

Many nights, "adventure" meant using the Howard's Donuts pay phone to call Randy and try to get into his house. Randy played bass in our favorite band, the Randy Band (I still don't know if it was named for him or for the British term for "lusty"). Quirky and elusive, Randy was 26 or 27, long-haired and bespectacled, big-grinned but often silent, part John Lennon, part Cheshire Cat. He lived alone in a ranch house, his mother having died, his father having decamped to a girlfriend's place in the suburbs. He had converted a spare bedroom into a recording studio and he and his guy friends hung out there all night. He made that humdrum neighborhood as cool as New York City.

Randy was gracious with invitations but only rarely followed through. Phoning Laura in the afternoons, he would purr, "Call me later and come over." But when she dialed his number at 2 a.m., he mostly didn't answer. That was the game they played: Sometimes he let them in; sometimes he didn't.

That summer, I decided that seeing inside Randy's house was a necessary step toward growing up. One night, then, I stayed in the car when they drove over. We parked Laura's brother's yellow Beetle at the curb and went around to the carport. Kathy knocked on the back door. No answer. "Randy!" Laura hissed, loud enough for him to hear but not loud enough to wake the neighbors. Kathy returned to the front of the house and tossed pebbles at his music studio window.

I lay down on the front lawn, slightly fearful that the door would open. What did people do in that house? Unlike the mysterious indoors, nothing scared me in the yard and I stretched out like a sunbather while Kathy and Laura prowled near the shrubbery, eyeing the windows for movement in the Venetian blinds. Memphis is a city of fine trees, and on that summer night the canopy above my head formed a lacy screen across the sky. I could have stayed there for hours.

Then the blinds moved. The door opened. I followed them inside.

What happened in that house? Well, Laura and Kathy became domestic. Randy's mom had decorated years before, and my friends seemed determined to restore the femininity that was lost when Randy turned the place into a bachelor pad. They replaced the toilet paper in the bathroom, rearranged knickknacks on the coffee tables, made faux canapés out of the Triscuits and Cheez Whiz they found in the pantry. Eventually, we entered the studio, where Randy hovered over synthesizers with guys we barely knew. For the next few hours, we perched on barstools, listening. Instead of whole songs, they played notes and chords, tunes that changed and matured through the process of creation. They were actually making music there.

Laura passed around another plate of Triscuits. Kathy straightened a pillow. I ended up by the window, looking out through the blinds. Near me, Randy and his nameless friends tweaked at knobs and levers, filled the air with sound. Outside, through the branches of those big Memphis oaks, the stars watched over all of us. I was not quite 17 years old, in love with night and summer and sweat and music — in love with love, too, though I hadn't experienced it yet. Was that dark sky more spectacular when I observed it through Randy's window?

More than anything, I wanted to believe in the wonder of the world.

So, I thought, Yes.

Novelist Dana Sachs has lived in North Carolina, Connecticut, California, Scotland, Vietnam and Hungary, but her heart retains its Memphis beat. Her latest novel is The Secret of Nightingale Palace.

Summer Afternoon

By Lee Zacharias

Henry James once said that the most beautiful words in the English language are "summer afternoon," though it seems unlikely that for him those words summoned the sweltering humidity of a Piedmont August. Rather, they imply something deliciously lazy, a luxurious indolence that exists outside of time, just as memories of childhood summers do: backyard kiddie pools, Kool-Aid mustaches, the melody of the ice cream truck and feel of cool evening grass on bare feet, most of all the pursuit of fireflies at dusk, a time not driven by school bells or minutes counted till recess. Not until we are teens do our music, hairdos and clothes return us to the world of calendar and clock, transforming us into relics of this generation or that.

Summer is a magic trick lost for most adults, who scramble to cram a season's worth of indolence into a week or two at the beach. Even for teachers, with their famous "summers off" — and for thirty-five years I was one — the trick doesn't quite work. Oh, I experienced the magic briefly during the very first days after school adjourned, days that were technically not summer at all but late spring, when months of writing time, laps at the outdoor pool and the promise of a newly planted garden seemed to stretch endlessly ahead. Fresh mulch hid the weeds waiting just beneath the soil, the water was refreshingly cold and the shimmering ideal of all those words not yet set to paper seemed to float miraculously in the air. But even before June could slip into July, the pool would grow tepid, the wild morning glories and poke would launch their invasion, and few were the mornings I could walk the dog, swim or pull weeds before sweat stung my eyes and soaked my shirt. Worse: As the words piled up on the pages they somehow had less shimmer, less resonance and more thunk. How I used to hate to see the crape myrtles bloom, those omens, reminders that summer would come to an unseasonable end when school began again in August. It is probably no coincidence that I could not grow crape myrtles myself. Invariably they got powdery mildew and had to be dug out.

The first house I bought in Greensboro had a screened porch. This was a bonus I had not learned to covet in the years I spent growing up in the Midwest (like the sunroof that came with the first used car I purchased, a sunroof I didn't want and wouldn't pay for because all they did was leak, I insisted to the salesman, the same sunroof that led me to swear a week later I would never buy another car without one). I acquired some second-hand wicker furniture, sprayed it white, and hung plants. Because I wrote at an electric typewriter I ran an extension cord. Much of my first novel was typed at a little table on that screened porch, long before the days of word-processing, when the rainless afternoon thunder of July and August would force me to unplug. In the evenings my husband and I often sat out in the dark, listening to the tree frogs and cicadas as the hum of traffic slowed for the night. Sometimes we even moved our little black and white TV to the side door and watched *Masterpiece Theatre* and *Hill Street Blues* from the porch.

When it was time for a bigger house, a screened porch topped the list of must-haves. We got a grand one, running the width of the house with a roof held up by white pillars. I no longer wrote there but could have entertained an army. These days the porch is much smaller. My late mother-in-law's wicker settee and chairs, now grown somewhat shabby, are all that fit. There's no room to entertain — for if the dog so much as moves, his tail sweeps every wineglass to the floor. But it is a wonderful place to sit in the dark and listen to a soft rain, and most summer afternoons you will find me there, reading, dog snoozing nearby on the settee. Let the crape myrtles bloom, for a few years ago I retired, and the book in my lap is not a text I plan to teach or a manuscript from someone's portfolio for promotion and tenure, but an untasted world taken from the tottering stacks of such worlds atop the file cabinets in my study. Summer no longer ends abominably early, and if the August humidity oppresses, there's a breeze from the overhead fan. I will linger until the light fails before dinner, the weather chills, and it's time to turn on the gas logs. But for now it is summer, and when I look up from my book there is another world going on just outside, leaves blow, children play, a package is delivered, a dog strolls past, somewhere down the block someone is mowing a lawn, and for that one eternal moment I know exactly what Henry James meant.

Lee Zacharias is the author of two novels and a collection of short stories. Her latest book, The Only Sounds We Make, *a collection of personal essays, is published by Hub City Press.*

The Bad Old Days

By Drew Perry

You probably won't even need an air conditioner, somebody said. Summer, 1997. Put a box fan on one end blowing out. Put another on the other end blowing in.

I'd just moved to Greensboro from Boston. My ex-girlfriend and I had spent the better part of the previous year proving to each other that we ought to stay ex-ed. I had a brand-new pound dog. I'd come for the MFA program, to try to learn how to write. This was my first time living alone. I'd found a one-bedroom shotgun apartment in a hundred-year-old Victorian. I was in a delicate place, is what I'm wanting to say.

I lasted maybe a week. But it turns out nobody else could live AC-free, either.

Most of us grad students were living in the same kinds of places, all these apartments cut into all these houses in the same few mainly historical blocks. No one could afford more than one air conditioner, and no fuse box could survive it, anyway, so the question was this: Do I want to live comfortably, or sleep at night? Everyone I knew opted for sleep. Set up a window unit in your bedroom, close the door a couple of hours before you intend to go in there, suffer through the rest of your apartment growing stiller, smaller — or crank up that box fan — and there is no joy truer than walking in and feeling the refrigerator rush of cold air, the growing suspicion that if you work at it hard enough, you might achieve a small thunderstorm in the hallway where the two air masses meet.

Except for sleeping, we lived on front porches.

It was like this for two or three summers. Or six. It's all a wash. We call them the bad old days now. We were poor. We were happy. Mornings we wrote, or worked odd jobs. We survived until the afternoon. We had baby pools in the front yards. One fairly sodden string of weeks, I am ashamed to admit, we bleached them to keep mold from growing — it was hard work, the dumping and refilling, and the water bills grew expensive. I had a buddy who dug a full pond, waist-deep, into the backyard behind his apartment. Another who hung a junker window unit off his porch railing, extension cord running around the side of the house, coolish air blowing out the front, blast furnace out the back. We kept what beer we could afford — so off-brand we had to special-order it from the grocery store — on ice in broken coolers. We had plans to affix lawnmower wheels to one of the dead refrigerators in somebody's basement and make a sort of soapbox derby car, but no one could figure out a suitable braking system. When it rained — if it ever rained — we'd set up two-liter soda bottles in the street, pull an actual bowling ball from a tractor-tire flowerbed and bowl, mid-storm, right down the middle of the road. Three separate people had to serve as backstops — we were worried the ball would roll through the intersection and maim somebody, or worse.

The neighborhood association loved us.

Summer is for children, and that's what we were. We were too old for it, and knew it. Or we knew that we were almost too old, and were spending those years trying everything we could to hang on. To keep whatever was coming at bay. And now it's here. We're grown. We're married. We have jobs, functioning automobiles, clean laundry, central air — some of us may, even though I shudder to think of it, be members of neighborhood associations.

I have two boys. A bunch of us have children. Those of us who are still here get together on summer weekends, cook out in the backyard, let the kids chase each other through sprinklers. And while that's summer through and through — fireflies, watermelon, kids right up against the edge of injury — we try not to forget the old summers altogether. Last year a friend down the street, a veteran of those bad old days, rock-salted a cooler, froze everything inside. He was thrilled. We all were. And while the kids played, while we watched them, we set in right away trying to improve his system, trying to figure out how to do it right.

Drew Perry is the author of the novels Kids These Days *and* This is Exactly Like You. *He teaches writing at Elon University.*

Keeping Summer Close

By Jill McCorkle

My earliest childhood memories of summer are anchored at one end by my grandmother's garden — the adjoining lot she single-handedly manned, producing enough bounty to keep everyone filled with field peas and tomatoes and corn all through the year — and the other by my family's annual pilgrimage for a week at the beach. As is often the case, a large part of the trip was the getting ready and anticipation of it all to come. My mother always had baked a big ham and my grandmother sent us off with pound cake and vegetables. There were always new coloring books and comics (later novels and needlework projects that may or may not get done) spread there on the back seat where my sister and I sat for what seemed the endless drive that would get us there. I have now, at times, spent as long commuting to work, but then the journey seemed long and the week was an endless stretch of sun and sand, fishing and collecting shells. There was the quest to be the first to see the ocean; we rolled down the windows and could smell it long before we crossed over the bridge and could see dunes and sea oats and, finally, a sliver of green.

The years all run together in my mind. Sunburns and mini-golf and sparklers lit and twirled most nights. There was always one night spent at the Myrtle Beach pavilion: riding The Swamp Fox or wanting to ride the Swamp Fox but chickening out and watching from the sidelines; the bells and calls of those throwing darts or baseballs to win the large stuffed bears dangling from booths; and homemade ice cream from a place called Painters. But the bulk of the time was just spent on the beach, long lazy days. I was an adult before I saw any beach other than those of the Carolinas and I think the first word in my mind was, really? Had I really spent a lifetime taking for granted what was just an hour and a half down the road? The wide white sandy beaches, often sparsely populated, the large dunes and sea oats, water just the right temperature. From a kid's point of view, it was a week of heaven, even though in those earliest years, most houses didn't have air conditioning and so windows were left wide open, everything glazed in a fine coat of sand and salt. We had to take our own drinking water and so by the end of the week, that final jug was often reserved for brushing teeth. There usually wasn't a washer and dryer and so by Friday, my mother was starting to gather up everything and talking about how good it was going to feel to get home to clean cool sheets and no sand.

And sure enough, as much as I hated to leave, I was always amazed to get home and see how green our yard looked, how different the air smelled, how good it did feel to stretch out on clean sand-less sheets.

And I would find my grandmother just where we had left her, picking and cooking and canning and freezing the vegetables that would keep summer close all through the year. In choosing memories to anchor summer, I would put my grandmother in her side yard in a chair I still own, a big colander on her lap as she shelled endless amounts of butter beans and field peas, the lull of the adult conversation and cars passing on the street in front of her house, as soothing as the rhythmic sounds of the ocean I was already missing. When I think of summer, I immediately do go back to childhood and the enormous sense of freedom that came with that last day of school. And before my mind is able to fully fill in the blanks of all other aspects of life — difficulties and hardships of a particular time — I can conjure the adults around me — alive and engaged with daily life in a way that is all too easy to overlook. My dad would often sit on the beach in a sand chair, his fishing pole anchored in a holder so all he had to do was sip a beer, puff on his pipe and watch the line for action, and he would say: "It just doesn't get any better than this." I would have to agree.

Jill McCorkle, a native of Lumberton, North Carolina, is the author of four story collections and six novels, among them, Life After Life, Ferris Beach, *and* Carolina Moon. *She lives in Hillsborough with her husband.*

The Getaway

Home on Bald Head Island is a blessing for the Lucht family. Shoes and stress are left at the front door

By Ashley Wahl • Photographs by Rick Ricozzi

For David and Mary Lucht, family vacations are different now that the kids are grown. For starters, the kids don't come as often. Rachel and Becca are off backpacking together in Marrakech. Ryan is taking summer courses at UNCW. The den is quiet. The dog is sleeping. Surfaces and floorspace are distinctly uncluttered. But when the kids do come, in some ways their three-bedroom cottage in a maritime forest on the state's southernmost barrier island, Bald Head, feels more like home than their traditional Southern house in Wilmington.

The house itself is modest. From the outside, nothing sets it apart from nearby rentals with pitched roofs and white cedar siding and reverse living floor plans. The interior is breezy and unpretentious. Caribbean heart pine floors stretch from the entry hall to the upstairs living space. Light floods through double hung windows (sans treatments). Décor is coastal chic. But home goes beyond the confines of the pickled beadboard walls. For the Luchts, home is where the sun sets over the Atlantic. Where the night sky shines as if set with sequins. Where the creek winds through the salt marsh. Where deer and painted bunting visit the backyard.

At 526 Chicamacomico Way, home is where shoes are removed at the front door.

David Lucht has a very "shoes-on" type of job. Polished wingtips, to be exact. And while it's obvious that his job at Live Oak Banking Company provides him with a sense of contentment, serving as executive vice president and chief risk officer for one of the largest SBA lenders in the country is, without a doubt, highly stressful.

"The first time I got on the ferry [to Bald Head Island], I felt my blood pressure drop," says David. This was eleven years before he and Mary would spend their first night on the island; seven years before the founding of Live Oak Bank, their reason for moving to Wilmington in the first place. The kids were young. Retirement seemed faraway if not entirely abstract. But the moment that boat left the mainland, David Lucht felt like he'd just come home.

"We bought a lot that day," says David.

Before the Luchts came to Wilmington, home was Ohio. David and Mary grew up near the Cuyahoga River, just five miles (and three years) apart. He lived in the country. She lived in the city. They were lifeguards at the same lake.

"Both our dads were college professors at Kent State," says David, who is kind and gentle-natured but can spin a wry, understated joke at any moment. His feet are bare. His speech is unhurried. And when he smiles at Mary, who is seated beside him on a sky blue glider built for two, she smiles back. "I went to Miami University [Ohio]," he continues. Mary showed up three years later. "That's when I first suspected she was stalking me."

Mary rolls her eyes.

"And when I went back to Kent to get my master's, who follows me there?"

"That's your version," Mary says. "I didn't have any interest until after college."

An alternate story reveals they were engaged after six weeks of dating.
"It's unusual for us to be so impulsive," says Mary.
"Not as unusual for me," says David.
"Well, that's true," his bride agrees.
As they banter back and forth, the spark between them still alight after thirty-one years of marriage, a choir of cicadas sings out from the maritime forest.

"This is my favorite place," says Mary of a covered porch with composite wood tiles, crisp white columns and a sweeping view of the verdant canopy. "We bring breakfast out here. It's a great place to read. It's like being in a tree house."

Most days, she adds, you can hear the surf from here too.

Imagine watching a nest of sea turtle hatchlings erupt from the sand and pursue their manic dash for the ocean. That's what it's like at the Deep Point Marina terminal on Saturday mornings.

"Usually we're running for the ferry," says David.

Cars are left in the lot. The Luchts haul luggage, coolers and staples for the kitchen pantry. Addy, their 12-year-old collie, wags and smiles approvingly.

The ride from Southport to Bald Head only takes twenty minutes. Upon arrival, the scene is like that of a Nicholas Sparks novel. Pristine beaches dotted with oceanfront cottages. Lovers cuddled on wooden benches. Children eating Nye's Cream Sandwiches.

"One reason we love Bald Head is that dogs are allowed on the beaches without leashes," says David.

And with 10,000 of the island's 12,000 acres protected as nature preserves, Bald Head is home to an impressive array of wildlife, including nearly two hundred species of birds.

When the Luchts first bought property on Bald Head in 2000, they were still living in Ohio. David was climbing the corporate ladder of a $10 billion bank. Mary was full-time Mom.

"It was going to be a retirement plan," says David. But when the market overheated in 2001, the opportunity to sell the lot they bought was too good to pass up. "We like to say [Realtor] Doug Oakley put our kids through school."

Three years ago, the Luchts returned to Bald Head looking for a weekend retreat. Perhaps a condo. Something small.

What they found instead was a 2,500-square-foot Cape Fear Station home with a separate crofter cottage — a cozy sanctuary spacious enough for the entire family.

The house, built by BHI Construction Co., had been on the market since its completion in 2008. The Luchts were first to call it home.

"We never dreamed of having a house like this," says Mary, who found the task of outfitting an empty house both exhilarating and daunting. "I'd never even furnished an entire room."

She turned to Custom Home Furnishings in Wilmington. Four hours later, the job was done.

"Most things were made in North Carolina," says Mary. "Except for the [Amish] table and chairs in the dining area. Those were made in Ohio."

Although the Luchts are avid readers, you won't find many books here.

"My father was an obsessive bibliophile," says Mary, who taught Language Arts before earning her master's in Reading. "I saw what happens when you keep too many books." David trades his dog-eared volumes with coworkers. Mary shares them with her sisters and friends.

Wall art spells beach life: twin herons carved on driftwood (from Home Again); ceramic starfish (a gift from Mary's sister), sea turtle painting (from friends).

In the kitchen, colorful local pottery on display above craftsman style cabinets pops.

"Dave picked those out," says Mary. Not all of his selections make the cut. In the upstairs master suite, for instance, a goofy pelican wearing blue mirror lenses is tucked away in the bathroom.

"I have trashy taste," says David.

"We'll call it whimsical," says his bride.

When the kids do come, whether on vacation or to feel at home, Rachel and Becca share the downstairs bedroom that opens to a screened porch where David has claimed a spot for his future hammock. Ryan, the oldest, prefers the crofter.

The den is for movie nights.

"I wanted to have a TV away from the main space," says Mary.

Eventually, the Luchts plan to spend the majority of their time at Bald Head. They'll likely keep a condo in Wilmington. But here, Mary could volunteer with the Conservancy. And when the kids have families of their own, this is where they'll continue to spend holidays.

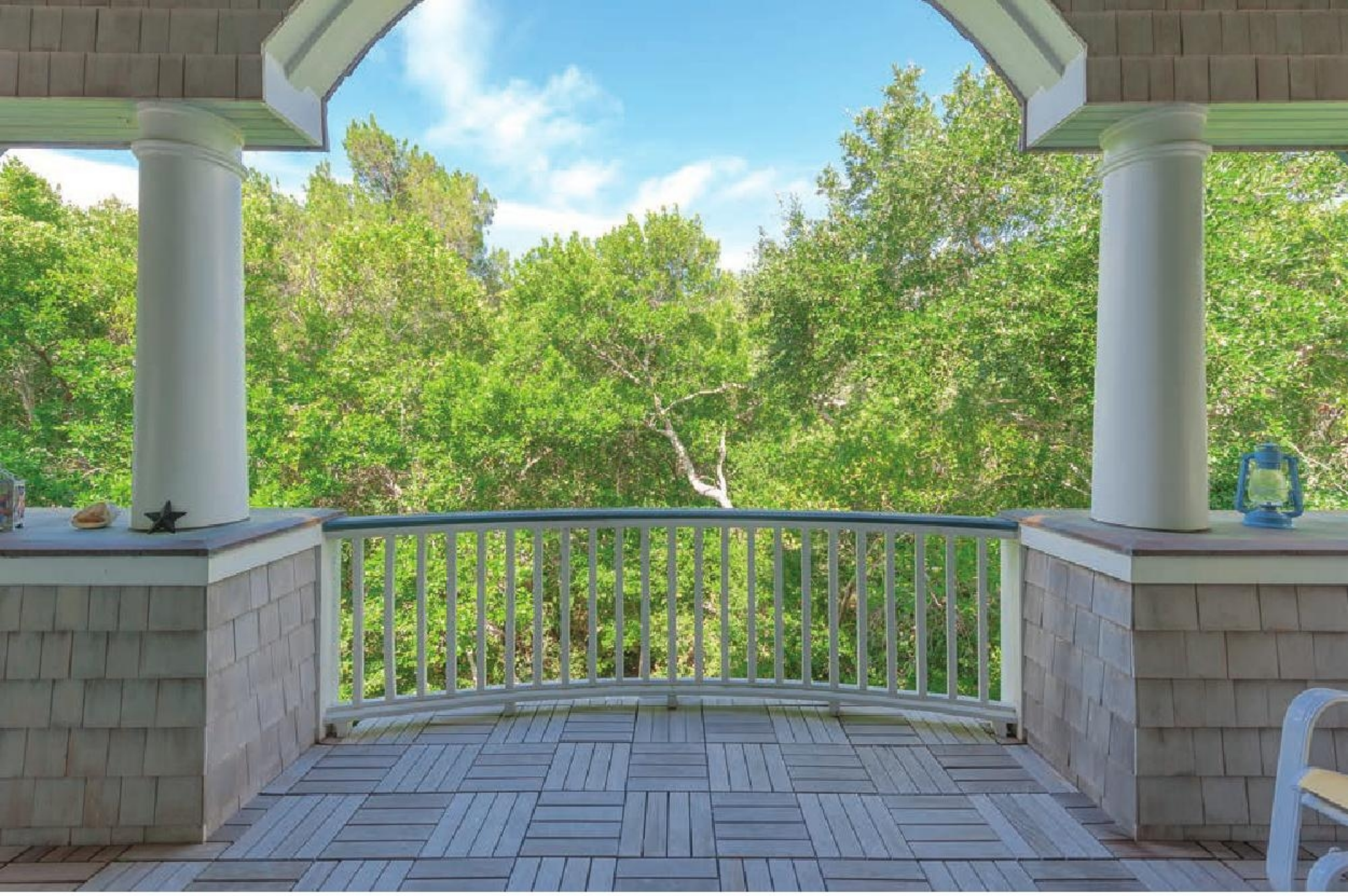
Meantime, their house is for sharing.

"We don't rent it out, but we love for the house to be full even when we're not here," says David.

Friends and family are always welcome, and the Luchts offer their home to honeymooners, pastors and missionaries.

"This house is a huge blessing," says Mary.

When the kids come home, everything they need is right here.



King of the Jungle

Wilmington gardener Bruce Baldwin has a thing for tropical plants. A very big thing

By Jamie Lynn Miller · Photographs by Mark Steelman

In Wilmington — night, day, in early morning dew or late afternoon sunshine — the jungle never sleeps. Just ask Bruce and Joyce Baldwin, childhood sweethearts whose 1980 Pine Valley home is completely surrounded by a tropical wonderland with jungle-scapes straight out of exotic travel brochures.

"I've always liked jungles, so I just grew my own," says Bruce Baldwin with a chuckle. And thanks to Wilmington's subtropical climate, his backyard jungle grows and grows. Baldwin nurtures a myriad of palms and fruits — even gourds, which he carves into instruments and works of art. "I scrape the skin off, then start carving and etching," he explains, handling one hand-painted example featuring red and yellow parrots flitting among tropical flowers. He's fashioned another gourd into a Central American instrument known as a guiro, which he carved into the shape of a fish.

Growing up next door to a working cattle and crop farm, it was years before Baldwin discovered his penchant for tropical fauna. He did, however, appreciate the local scene (and scenery): rolling hills, tomato fields, and joyrides on "borrowed" farm machinery.

"Our neighbor was the real farmer," says Baldwin of the man next door who rented the land. "He used to leave his tractors lying around. That's how

I learned to drive stick!"

While pursuing a Master's in counseling psychology at Arizona State University, Baldwin marveled at the intensity of plant life in the desert surroundings. It was while pursuing his doctorate at the University of Florida, however, that he got his first real glimpse of tropical plants and trees. "I really developed a love for the vegetation," says Baldwin of his trips to the Florida Keys. Subsequent travel to Central America only reinforced his tropical passion, and he and Joyce still explore that area's jungles. "Guatemala, Costa Rica — I know enough Spanish to get by and get off the beaten path, into the backcountry," he says.

A post-doc fellowship led to nine years on faculty at UNC-Chapel Hill. Next, the Baldwins headed to the beach. "Really, we had only planned to be in North Carolina for a year — we were going to join family in the Northeast — but forty-four years later, we're still here!"

The last thirty-four years have been spent in Wilmington: raising a family, developing a psychology practice (at age 70, Baldwin still maintains a small clientele), and cultivating the endlessly fertile tropical paradise out back.

The landscape architect in the family, Bruce's brother, designed the overall garden concept, and the Baldwins have maintained, propagated and tended to the garden all by themselves. "We're blessed and cursed with fertile soil around here," says Baldwin, alluding to the endless pruning and inevitable yard work that comes with cultivating one's own personal jungle.

"Two things interest me when choosing plants," he declares. "Does it have fruit? And will it thrive in local soil?" Other than that, any plant goes.

There's a small front garden, more of a traditional zone, populated by river birch, Southern live oaks and mahonia. A few paces farther and leading toward the backyard, an archway marks the point of no return: classic ends, lush abundance begins.

"Here's the jungle," says Baldwin, sweeping his hand through the archway.

And just as Eskimos have a multitude of words for snow, "palm tree forest" fails to describe just exactly what's going on out there. Mediterranean windmill palm known as the Grandfather palm (hence its fuzzy, hair-like features) grow amidst butia capitata (also called pindo or jelly palms), replete with light green fronds and delicious bright orange fruit the size of half-dollars. "They're hardy in Wilmington, and the fruit is quite, quite edible," says Baldwin, pausing briefly during the tour to sing jelly palm praises. The butia also have sharp, sword-like spikes which loop over the fruit, keeping animals away, while occasionally pricking the attentive gardener's thumb.

The sago palms seem slow to embrace summer, but Baldwin nods fondly in their direction. "It was so cold last year, the fronds froze. But they're coming back. Soon, there'll be feather-like fronds once again, these fuzzy, harmless tentacles."

Fully grown cabbage palms were brought in from Florida, and with them came tropical creatures that equally thrive in Baldwin's corner of Zone 8. "Within a year, we had an infestation of scorpions," he says. "They were

brought in with those trees. Totally harmless, but nonetheless . . . Joyce has an office out back, and every now and then, she'd find them in her files."

No scorpions in the office/guesthouse-turned-winter-greenhouse these days. Here, the Baldwins move seasonal plants (like the 50-pound staghorn fern) inside for the colder months and wrap the porch in clear plastic. "When we first built it, our son, Travis, was 15, and he thought we were building him a bachelor pad," says Baldwin, with a laugh. Nowadays, Travis, 39, and his sister Elissa, 37, join the ranks of delighted guests who wake up in the jungle.

Among the myriad of palms are a variety of plants, trees and bushes bearing fruit and splashes of color. The ginger lilies bloom with white or yellow flowers: "They're so fragrant, you can smell them from the street," adds Baldwin.

There are two varieties of tangerines, red navel oranges and lemons. Trellises of muscadine grapes border blueberry bushes and subtropical feijoa, another fruit-bearing plant that grows well in Wilmington's soil. There are goji berries, black bamboo, and Baldwin's favorite practical joke plant, the star hibiscus. "It looks just like cannabis," he says, thinking of the many guests who have widened their eyes upon seeing it.

At the far end of the garden, in a protected corner with lots of Southern sun, stands the olive tree. Though there's little sign of fruit-bearing presence, Baldwin isn't discouraged. He knows that olive trees take time. "It's a hardy plant," he explains. "But we may not see the fruits of its labor in our lifetime."

The fig tree, however, always delivers. "If we behave ourselves, the squirrels leave us a few."

Jerusalem artichokes, which really taste more like potatoes, go straight from the garden into the Baldwins' kitchen, as does the fruit from the loquat tree, whose clusters of five to six bright orange fruits find their way into household jellies and pies.

With a nod to Baldwin's childhood landscapes, the garden's lone water feature — a mosquito-fish pond — is bordered by stones hauled straight from central Pennsylvania. "The back of the van was very low on the highway," says Baldwin, recalling the long drive back to Wilmington.

He points toward the deck, which overlooks the pond, the stones, and affords sweeping overview of the garden. "That's my perch in the mornings," says Baldwin. "I drink coffee and read the paper, and there's a cool breeze — it's just right. I sit and enjoy my very own jungle."

Jamie Lynn Miller is a freelance writer, rock climber and radio host from Aspen, Colorado. While pursuing her MFA in Creative Writing at UNCW, she's trading ski wax for surf wax and biking and the backroads to Wrightsville Beach.

happy 2

WRIGHTSVILLE BEACH, NC

DOG DAYS

COMING SOON!

nedleary PHOTOGRAPHY

Will Page PHOTOGRAPHY

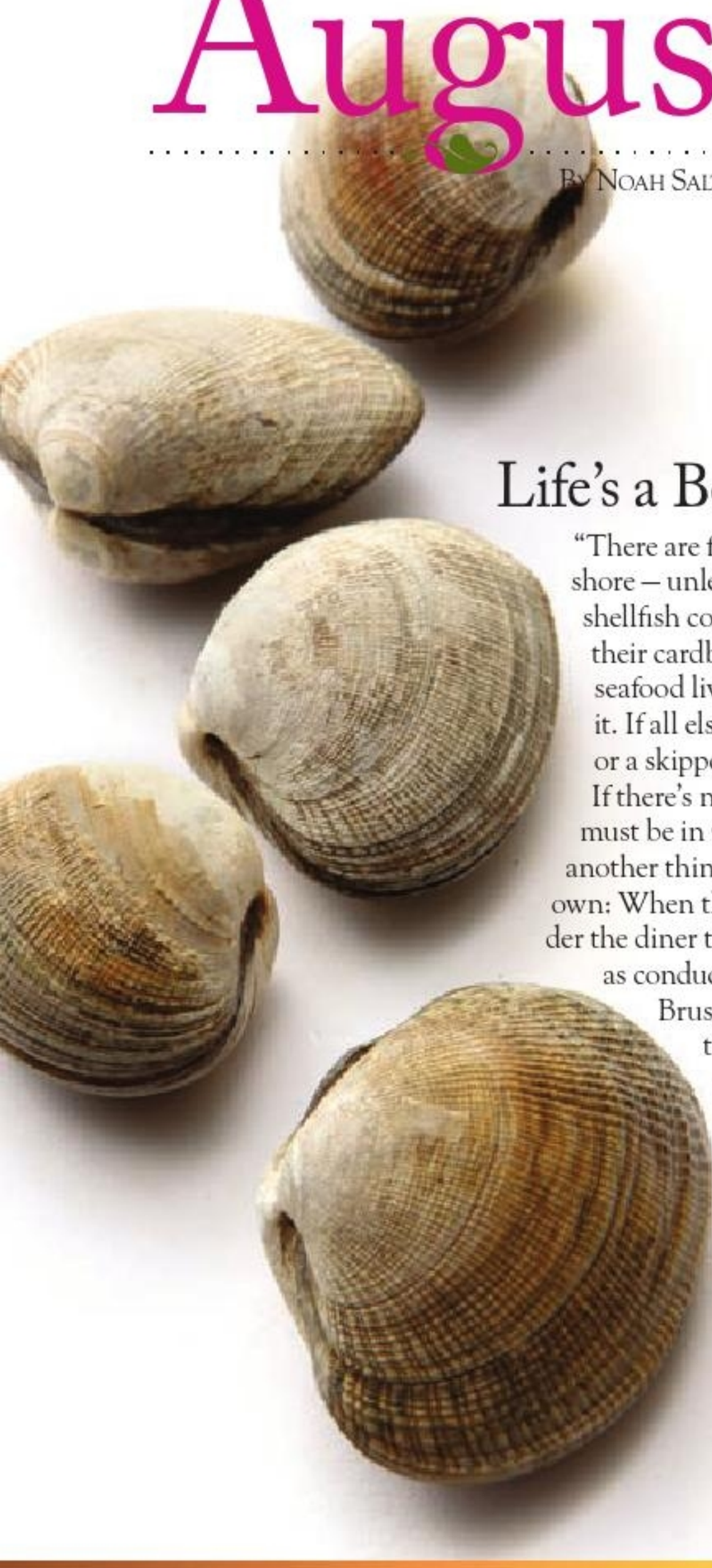
ALMANAC

August

By Noah Salt

Arranging a bowl of flowers in the morning
can give a sense of quiet in a crowded day —
like writing a poem,
or saying a prayer.
What matters is that one be, for a time,
inwardly attentive."

— Anne Morrow Lindbergh,
from *a Gift From the Sea*



Life's a Beach

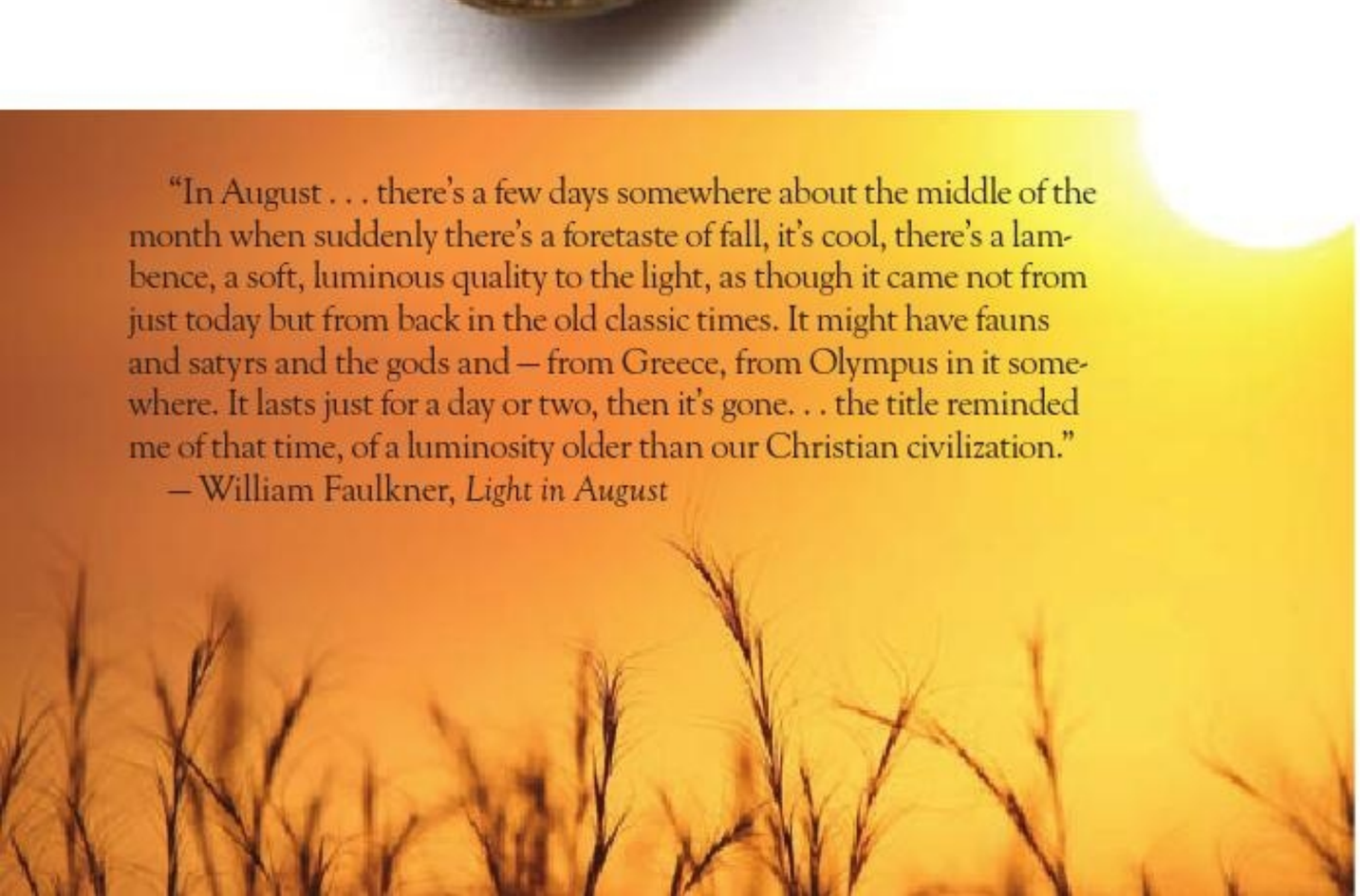
"There are few secrets to eating well at the shore — unless a newcomer thinks that fish and shellfish come from a fast-food case tasting like their cardboard wrappers. The sea is where seafood lives. So catch it, net it, dig it, trap it. If all else fails, buy it from a local grocer or a skipper on the dock and tote it home. If there's no place to buy fresh seafood, you must be in Ohio. Pack up and drive east. And another thing about catching and cooking your own: When the sea serves up dinner it doesn't order the diner to 'Enjoy your meal,' a remark about as conducive to good appetite as 'eat those Brussels sprouts.' Unless you are spectacularly sedentary, it's most rewarding to gather seafood by yourself, whether from the surf with rod or reel, from the marsh with baited string, or from a clam flat with toes or muddy fingers."

— From *The Wild Edge: Life and Lore of the Great Atlantic Beaches,* by Philip Kopper

August is either a month to quietly endure or a month to celebrate, rarely anything in between. If summer were a human lifetime — as some of us thought as kids — August would be summer's old age, for everything begins to wind down, fade away and show its wear by month's end. For the cottage gardener who is weary from the long days of battling heat and drought, weed and sucker vine, a second burst of shrub roses, the last wild phlox at the edge of the woodlands and the first ripening fruit trees may provide a needed boost to the spirit. But otherwise the garden has fallen pretty quiet. Time to go elsewhere for a bit. Few months are better suited, in fact, for other tasks rarely seen on one's work BlackBerry, including a neat disappearing act to coast or mountain slopes or just the back of the yard, a necessary escape from the tyranny of the clock to be with family or friends or simply alone to write a note in longhand or steal a nap in the hammock, chat with an elder on the porch, take an evening walk on a country road, read pure trash, beachcomb at low tide. We love August. We hate August. We need August. Can't wait till you're over, long hot August. Won't you please come again soon, dear sweet lazy August?

"In August . . . there's a few days somewhere about the middle of the month when suddenly there's a foretaste of fall, it's cool, there's a lambence, a soft, luminous quality to the light, as though it came not from just today but from back in the old classic times. It might have fauns and satyrs and the gods and — from Greece, from Olympus in it somewhere. It lasts just for a day or two, then it's gone. . . the title reminded me of that time, of a luminosity older than our Christian civilization."

— William Faulkner, *Light in August*



August 2014

Arts Calendar

Rodrigo y Gabriela in Concert

8/5

Dark Star Orchestra performs

8/13

8/1 Airlie Summer Concert

6–8 p.m. BLP performs dance tunes in the Gardens. Admission: $8. Airlie Gardens, 300 Airlie Road, Wilmington. Info: (910) 798-7700 or www.airliegardens.org.

8/1 Coastal Lifestyles Expo

10 a.m. – 4 p.m. Fifty-plus Coastal Lifestyles Expo featuring more than forty vendors plus free seminars and demonstrations on fitness, health, financial planning and retirement options. Admission: Free. Wilmington Convention Center, 515 Nutt Street, Wilmington. Info: www.wcfhba.com/50-coastal-lifestyles-expo.

8/1 Ocean Front Concert

7–10 p.m. The Imitations join Ocean Front Park's Variety Entertainment Series performing beach, soul and rock 'n' roll. Admission: Free. Ocean Front Park, 105 Atlantic Avenue, Kure Beach. Info: (910) 458-8216 or www.townofkurebeach.org.

8/1–3 Musical Theater

7:30 p.m. (Friday & Saturday); 3 p.m. (Sunday). *Into the Woods* presented by Brunswick Little Theatre features familiar characters like Little Red Riding Hood and Cinderella. Directed by Jen Iapalucci. Admission: $6–18. Odell Williamson Auditorium, Brunswick Community College, 50 College Road, Supply. Info: (910) 269-1518 or www.brunswicklittletheatre.com.

8/1–28 Art Exhibition

12–4 p.m. (Monday–Thursday). *Big Print: Rivers* features the works of ten artists who have printed river-themed woodcuts with a steamroller, silk screening and linoleum block prints. Admission: Free. UNCW Cultural Arts Building, 601 South College Road, Wilmington. Info: (910) 962-3440.

8/2 Cystic Fibrosis Gala

6 p.m. Pipeline to a Cure is a fundraising gala that honors local and nationally renowned surfers and raises awareness and funds for the Cystic Fibrosis Foundation. Country Club of Landfall, 800 Sun Runner Place, Wilmington. Info: (919) 845-2155 or www.cff.org.

8/2 & 3 Carnivorous Plant Hike

10 a.m. (Saturday and Sunday). Learn about nature with a park ranger and view the world of local plants that bite back. Plants include sundews, bladderworts, butterworts, pitcher plants and venus fly traps. Admission: Free. Carolina Beach State Park, 1010 State Park Road, Carolina Beach. Info: (910) 458-8206 or www.ncparks.gov.

8/4–15 Dance Camp

9 a.m. – 3 p.m. (Monday–Friday). Dance camp for ages 10 to teens includes modern dance, ballet, hip-hop, choreography, strength training, and a final performance. Dance Cooperative, 5202 Carolina Beach Road, Suite 17, Wilmington. Info: (910) 763-4995 or www.thedancecooperative.org.

8/5 Greenfield Lake Concert

6 p.m. Get ready for an evening of lightning-quick acoustic guitar playing by acclaimed Mexican duo Rodrigo y Gabriela. Admission: $35–40. Greenfield Lake Amphitheater, 1941 Amphitheater Drive, Wilmington. Info: (910) 332-0983 or www.greenfieldlakeamphitheater.com.

8/7 Sounds of Summer Concert

6:30–8 p.m. The Imitations (Motown and beach music) conclude the family-friendly outdoor music series at Wrightsville Beach Park.. Admission: Free. Wrightsville Beach Park, 1 Bob Sawyer Drive, Wrightsville Beach. Info: (910) 256-7925 or www.townofwrightsvillebeach.com.

8/7 Music in the Courtyard

6:30–8 p.m. Live music by Stray Local, an Americana trio whose acoustic sound features tight vocal harmonies and toe-tapping rhythms influenced by Southern old time, blues and R&B. Admission: $5–12. Cameron Art Museum, 3201 South Seventeenth Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 395-5999 or www.cameronartmuseum.org.

8/7 Shakespeare Club Film

7 p.m. *Coriolanus* (2011) tells the story of a banished hero of Rome who allies with a sworn enemy to take his revenge on the city. Directed by Ralph Fiennes; starring Brian Cox, Ralph Fiennes and Gerard Butler. Admission: $8–10. Thalian Hall, 310 Chestnut Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 632-2285 or www.thalianhall.org.

8/7 Live Music

7–9 p.m. Local surf rockers The Carvers perform on the pier. Admission: (910) 458-2000. Ocean grill and Tiki Bar, 1211 South Lake Boulevard, Carolina Beach. Info: (910) 458-2000 or www.oceangrilltiki.com.

8/8 Pleasure Island Concert

6:30–8:30 p.m. Live music by local bluegrass band South of K. Admission: Free. Fort Fisher Recreation Area, 118 Riverfront Road, Kure Beach. Info: (910) 458-8434 or www.pleasureisland.org.

8/9 Battleship 101

10 a.m. – 3 p.m. Volunteers engage visitors in the subjects of gunnery, radar, sickbay, galley, engineering and daily shipboard life. Admission: $6–12. Battleship NC, 1 Battleship Road, Wilmington. Info: (910) 251-5797 or www.battleshipnc.com.

8/9 SUP Boot Camp

6:30–8:30 a.m. Brief intro clinic and paddle workout presented by Wrightsville Stand Up Paddle Board Company and Shore Fitness. Includes board and paddle rental. Admission: $45. Blockade Runner Beach Resort, 275 Waynick Boulevard, Wrightsville Beach. Info: (910) 777-4979 or www.blockade-runner.com.

8/9 Community Health Fair

8 a.m. Rock the Block 6 Community Health Fair features medical screenings for cholesterol, diabetes, blood pressure, BMI and HIV, as well as dental education, food, music and free back to school items. Admission: Free. MedNorth Health Center, 925 North Fourth Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 202-8641 or www.mednorth.org.

8/9 Walk of Fame Induction

4 p.m. Celebrate Wilmington, Inc. will induct four Medal of Honor recipients onto the Walk of Fame. Inductees include Edwin Alexander Anderson (Engagement of Vera Cruz 1914), William David Halyburton (World War II), Charles Patrick Murray, Jr. (World War II) and Eugene Ashley, Jr. (Vietnam War). The Cotton Exchange, 321 North Front Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 264-2280 or www.celebratewilmington.org.

8/9 Purple Heart Dinner

6–9 p.m. Celebration/dinner hosted by the Purple Heart Foundation of North Carolina as a tribute to the eighty purple heart recipients in our area; includes guest speaker and a change to meet local heroes. Admission: $25. Wilmington Convention Center, 515 Nutt Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 251-5101 or www.eventbrite.com.

8/9 History Program

10 a.m. – 4 p.m. Mine Games: Torpedo Warfare on the Cape Fear. Learn about the role that obstructions and torpedoes played in the defenses of the lower Cape Fear River through displays and demonstrations using a reproduction of the "Wheatstone Exploder." Admission: Free. 8884 St. Philips Road, Winnabow. Info: (910) 371-6613 or www.nchistoricsites.org.

8/9 Film & Discussion

4–6:30 p.m. Twenty-fifth anniversary event featuring a screening of the award-winning documentary film *Growing Cities* followed by a panel discussion on Wilmington's current and future involvement in urban gardening programs. Admission: $30–25. Proceeds benefit the NHC Arboretum's Ability Garden. New Hanover County Arboretum, 6206 Oleander Drive, Wilmington. Info: (910) 798-7670 or gardeningnhc.org.

Wahine Classic at Wrightsville Beach

8/16

Yonder Mountain String Band performs

8/29

8/9 Brunswick Forest Concert

6–9 p.m. Brunswick Forest Summer Concert Series presents the Wilmington Big Band. Admission: Free. Annsdale Park in Brunswick Forest, 1007 Evangeline Drive, Leland. Info: www.brunswickforest.com.

8/9 Battleship Legacy Series

9 a.m. – 4 p.m. Blue and Gray North Carolinas. Carolina Living History Guild members discuss the history, navigation, construction and engineering of the USS North Carolina and the CSS North Carolina during the American Civil War; includes display of period small arms and working models of steam engines. Admission: $5–12. Battleship NC, 1 Battleship Road, Wilmington. Info: (910) 251-5797 or www.battleshipnc.com.

8/9 Comedy Court

8 p.m. Fake court session where lawyers are performers and the plaintiff and defendants are members of the audience. Admission: $3. Juggling Gypsy Café, 1612 Castle Street, Wilmington. Info: www.jugglinggypsy.com.

8/10 Film & Discussion

3 p.m. *The Collector* (2007, 60 min.). Documentary by filmmaker Olympia Stone, which explores the forty-six-year career of her father, Allan Stone, famed New York City gallery owner and art collector. Viewers are taken on an extraordinary path inside one man's obsessive submersion in art and its influence on the artists, art dealers and family members with whom he worked and lived. Admission: $5–10. Cameron Art Museum, 3201 South Seventeenth Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 395-5999 or www.cameronartmuseum.org.

8/11 Prologue

7–8 p.m. Join Ben Steelman of *Star News* and local author Anne Russell for a discussion of Russell's book *Tropical Depression*. WHQR MC Erny Gallery, 254 North Front Street, Wilmington. Info: whqr.org.

8/11 & 12 Junior Nature Program

10–11 a.m. Little Explorers Nature Program offers kids ages 2–5 a chance to discover nature through stories, songs, hands-on activities, hikes and crafts. This week's theme is "Go Fish." Admission: $3. Halyburton Park, 4099 South Seventeenth Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 341-0075 or www.halyburtonpark.com.

8/13 Reptile Feeding

4–4:30 p.m. Snake and turtle feeding for ages 3 and older includes a brief presentation about the live animals on display in the Event Center. Admission: $1. Halyburton Park, 4099 South Seventeenth Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 341-0075 or www.halyburtonpark.com.

8/13 Greenfield Lake Concert

5 p.m. Dark Star Orchestra performs original compositions and Grateful Dead classics. Admission: $25–30. Greenfield Lake Amphitheater, 1941 Amphitheater Drive, Wilmington. Info: www.greenfieldlakeamphitheater.com.

8/14 Housing Luncheon

11:30 a.m. – 1 p.m. The third annual "There is No Place Like Home" Luncheon, sponsored by AMEZ Housing raises funds to assist local families with affordable housing concerns. Free admission; donations appreciated. Proceeds benefit housing and human development programs in Southeastern North Carolina. Terraces at Sir Tyler, 1826 Sir Tyler Drive, Wilmington. Info: (910) 815-3826 or www.amezhousing.org.

8/14 Live Music

7–9 p.m. Former punk rocker JD Wilkes and the Dirt Daubers perform roots music on the pier. Admission: Free. Ocean Grill Tiki Bar, 1211 South Lake Boulevard, Carolina Beach. Info: (910) 458-2000 or www.oceangrilltiki.com.

8/14 Sunset Kayaking

4–8 p.m. Sunset kayaking trip at Eagle Island for ages 13 and older presented by the City of Wilmington and Mahanaim Adventures. Admission: $35–45. Halyburton Park, 4099 South Seventeenth Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 341-0075 or www.halyburtonpark.com.

8/14 Jazz at the Mansion

6:30–7:30 p.m. Geno and Friends finish off the summer music series at Bellamy Mansion with Latin jazz. Admission: $10–12. Bellamy Mansion, 503 Market Street, Wilmington. Info/Tickets: (910) 251-3700 or www.bellamymansion.org.

8/14 Junior Naturalist Program

1:30–3 p.m. Hands-on nature program for ages 5 to 11. This week's theme "Ponds, Lakes and Oceans" explores the bio-diverse world of major water systems and how animals adapt to their environment; program includes the construction of an aquatic raft. Admission: $5. Halyburton Park, 4099 South Seventeenth Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 341-0075 or www.halyburtonpark.com.

8/14 Architecture Lecture

6:30 p.m. Lecture by architect Marlon Blackwell, FAIA, on his work based in design strategies which draw upon vernaculars, contradictions of place, and seek to transgress conventional boundaries or architecture. Admission: $5–10. Cameron Art Museum, 3201 South Seventeenth Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 395-5999 or www.cameronartmuseum.org.

8/15 Airlie Concert

6–8 p.m. Reggae tunes by Signal Fire. Admission: $8. Airlie Gardens, 300 Airlie Road, Wilmington. Info: (910) 798-7700 or www.airliegardens.org.

8/15 Music & Comedy

7–10 p.m. Ocean Front Park's Variety Entertainment Series presents rock/opera/pop music by Dylan Linehan followed by the comedy of Tim Sherrill and John Felts. Admission: Free. Ocean Front Park, 105 Atlantic Avenue, Kure Beach. Info: (910) 458-8216 or www.townofkurebeach.org.

8/15–17 Port City Rib Fest

11 a.m. – midnight. (Friday and Saturday); 12–7p.m. (Sunday). Three-day national BBQ and music festival featuring world champion pit masters, great food, live music, kids' zone, karaoke and a marketplace. Admission: $1–7. Battleship Park, 1 Battleship Road, Wilmington. Info: www.portcityribfest.com.

8/16 Dance & Fitness

9:30 a.m. – 5:30 p.m. Free day of dance and fitness for all ages including ballet, tap, jazz, acro, lyrical jazz, contemporary, hip hop, parent tot, zumba and barre. Advance reservation required. Admission: Free. Wilmington School of Ballet, 3834 Oleander drive, Wilmington. Info: (910) 794-9590 or www.wilmingtonschoolofballet.com.

8/16 Kids @ CAM

12–3 p.m. Enjoy an afternoon of art and imagination while exploring the galleries and make your own art to take home. Admission: donation. Cameron Art Museum, 3201 South Seventeenth Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 395-5999 or www.cameronartmuseum.org.

8/16 Oakdale Walking Tour

10 a.m. – 12 p.m. Superintendent Eric Kozen on funerary art, horticultural delights and more during this historical walking tour of North Carolina's oldest rural cemetery. Admission: $10. Oakdale Cemetery, 520 North Fifteenth Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 762-9947 or www.oakdalecemetery.org.

8/16 Book Signing

3–6 p.m. Book signing with local author Billy Beasley for the release of his new book The River Hideaway, fiction reflecting the racial turmoil of Wilmington in 1967. Barnes & Noble, Mayfaire Town Center, 6835 Conservation Way, Wilmington. Info: (910) 256-5131 or billybeasley.blogspot.com.

8/16 & 17 Wahine Classic

9 a.m. – 5 p.m. Surfing competition open to all female surfers including pro shortboard and longboard divisions as well as amateur shortboard and longboard and stand up paddleboard. South end, Wrightsville Beach. Info: (910) 465-9638 or www.wrightsvillebeachwahineclassic.com.

8/17 Dance Forum

2–4 p.m. Choreographers present works-in-progress for constructive feedback. Free admission; donations welcome. Cameron Art Museum, 3201 South Seventeenth Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 395-5999 or www.cameronartmuseum.org.

8/18–22 Dance Camp

9 a.m. – 12 p.m. Dance camp for children ages 3–6 explores movement, stimulates imagination and promotes creativity through creative dance, art, yoga and music. Admission: $100. Dance Cooperative, 5202 Carolina Beach Road, Suite 17, Wilmington. Info: (910) 763-4995 or www.thedancecooperative.org.

8/19 Live Music

9 p.m. Singer/songwriter Donavon Frankenreiter performs a selection of songs from his latest release, the folk-infused Start Livin'. Admission: $20. Ziggy's by the Sea, 208 Market Street, Wilmington. Info: ziggysbythesea.com.

8/21 Greenfield Lake Concert

5:30 p.m. San Diego-based acclaimed reggae ensemble The Tribal Seeds performs; New Kingston and The Expanders opens. Admission: $23. Greenfield Lake Amphitheater, 1941 Amphitheater Drive, Wilmington. Info: (910) 343-3614 or www.greenfieldlakeamphitheater.com.

8/21 Live Music

7–9 p.m. Durham/Chapel Hill-based dark rockers The Old Ceremony perform on the pier. Admission: Free. Ocean Grill and Tiki Bar, 1211 South Lake Park Boulevard, Carolina Beach. Info: (910) 458-2000 or www.oceangrilltiki.com.

8/21 Stories From the Road

6:30–7:30 p.m. *The Tar Heel Traveler – Stories from the Road*. Scott Mason celebrates the colorful characters, out-of-the-way places, and rich history of North Carolina, sharing the stories behind his travels across the Tar Heel state. Bellamy Mansion, 503 Market Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 251-3700 or www.bellamymansion.org.

8/21–24 Sarus Art Festival

6–10 p.m. (Thursday); 7 a.m. – 10 p.m. (Friday); 7 a.m. – 9 p.m. (Saturday); 7 a.m. (Sunday). Festival for site-specific and experimental art offering interdisciplinary arts events and performances throughout the greater Wilmington area. International, national and local artists perform new works created for our area and offer workshops and performance opportunities to community members. Admission: Free. Various venues in Wilmington. Info: sarusfestival.weebly.com.

8/22 Leon Russell in Concert

7 p.m. Progressive Music Group presents Rock and Roll Hall of Famer Leon Russell at Brooklyn Arts Center. Starting his professional career at age 14, he has performed with greats such as George Harrison, Doris Day, Elton John, Ray Charles, Eric Clapton, The Beach Boys and The Rolling Stones. Admission: $40–50. Brooklyn Arts Center, 516 North Fourth Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 538-2939 or www.brooklynartsnc.com.

8/22 Gallery Walk

6–9 p.m. Self-guided tour through downtown Wilmington galleries and studios showcasing local art through opening receptions, demonstrations, artist discussions and exhibitions. Admission: Free. Various venues in Wilmington. Info: (910) 343-0998 or www.wilmingtonfourthfridays.com.

8/22 & 23 Beach Bash

5–10 p.m. (Friday); 4–10 p.m. (Saturday). Phlock to the Beach: A Buffett Style Beach Bash features a "Dress Like a Parrot Head" Pub & Grub Crawl, bocce ball tournament, horseshoe tournament, pancake breakfast and a beach concert by tropical rockers Latitude. Admission: $10–18. Cape Fear Regional Jetport, 4019 Long Beach Road, Oak Island. Info: (910) 457-6964 or www.southportoakisland.com.

8/22 Pleasure Island Concert

6:30–8:30 p.m. Live music by Bakkwoodz (classic country). Admission: Free. Fort Fisher Recreation Area, 118 Riverfront Road, Kure Beach. Info: (910) 458-8434 or www.pleasureisland.org.

8/24 Lumina Daze

4–10 p.m. Fundraiser/celebration featuring live music, dancing, live and silent auctions and presentations on Wrightsville Beach history. Admission: $15. Proceeds benefit the Wrightsville Beach Museum. Wrightsville Beach Museum, 275 Waynick Boulevard, Wrightsville Beach. Info: (910) 256-2569 or www.wbmuseum.com.

8/25 & 26 Junior Nature Program

10–11 a.m. Nature program for ages 2–5 offering a chance to discover nature through stories, songs, hands-on activities, hikes and crafts. This week's theme is "Animal Needs in Nature." Admission: $3. Halyburton Park, 4099 South Seventeenth Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 341-0075 or www.halyburtonpark.com.

8/28 Forward Motion Dance

7 p.m. Explore the creative process with Forward Motion Dance Company and guest dancers collaborating with cello soloist Jude Eden, visual artist Kristin Gibson, costume designer Rachael Goolsby and filmmaker Patrick Ogelvie. Evening includes dance performances and open discussion. Admission: $5–10. Cameron Art Museum, Weyerhaeuser Reception Hall, 3201 South Seventeenth Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 395-5999 or www.cameronartmuseum.org.

8/29 Poetry Jam

8 p.m. Spoken word poetry jam hosted by Bigg B and Sandra, the Mid-day Miss of Coast 97.3 fm. Cash bar available, seats purchased at the door. Admission: $3–5. Cameron Art Museum, Weyerhaeuser Reception Hall, 3201 South Seventeenth Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 763-0973.

8/29 Hospice Gala

7 p.m. The Last Chance to Wear White Pants Gala is a fundraiser for Lower Cape Fear Hospice featuring live music, heavy hors d'oeuvres, cocktails and premiere raffle packages. Admission: $125. Coastline Convention Center, 503 Nutt Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 796-8099 or www.hospicewhitepants.org.

8/29 Greenfield Lake Concert

6 p.m. 98.3 The Penguin presents neo-bluegrass sensations the Yonder Mountain String Band. Admission: $25–30. Greenfield Lake Amphitheater, 1941 Amphitheater Drive, Wilmington. Info: www.greenfieldlakeamphitheater.com.

8/30 March of Dimes

8 a.m. 5k race benefiting the March of Dimes to help give babies a healthy start in life. Admission: $10–35. Trysports Event Field, Mayfaire Town Center, 925 Town Center Drive, Wilmington. Info: its-go-time.com.

8/31 Sacred Harp Singing

2–4 p.m. Traditional form of a cappella social singing dating back to Colonial America. No experience necessary; songbooks provided. Admission: Free. Cameron Art Museum,Weyerhaeuser Reception Hall, 3201 South Seventeenth Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 395-5999 or www.cameronartmuseum.org.

WEEKLY HAPPENINGS

Monday Farmers' Market

8 a.m. – 1 p.m. Curbside market offering fresh produce, baked goods and unique crafts from local vendors. Open through October 4. Admission: Free. Seawater Lane, Wrightsville Beach. Info: (910) 256-7925 or www.townofwrightsvillebeach.com.

Monday Turtle Talks

7–8 p.m. Learn about sea turtles with the Pleasure Island Sea Turtle Project. Program runs through 8/25. Admission: Free. Ocean Front Park, 105 Atlantic Avenue, Kure Beach. Info: (910) 458-8216 or www.townofkurebeach.org.

Monday–Wednesday Cinematique Films

7 p.m. Independent, classic and foreign films. Check online for updated listings and special screenings. Admission: $7. Thalian Hall, 310 Chestnut Street, Wilmington. Info/Tickets: (910) 632-2285 or www.thalianhall.org.

Tuesday Kure Beach Market

8 a.m. – 12 p.m. Open-air market featuring locally grown produce and artisan crafts. Open through August 26. Admission: Free. Ocean Front Park, 105 Atlantic Avenue, Kure Beach. Info: (910) 458-8216 or www.townofkurebeach.org.

Tuesday Wine Tasting

6–8 p.m. Free wine tasting hosted by a wine professional plus wine and small plate specials all night. Admission: Free. The Fortunate Glass, 29 South Front Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 399-4292 or www.fortunateglasswinebar.com.

Tuesday Cape Fear Blues Jam

8 p.m. A unique gathering of the area's finest Blues musicians. Bring your instrument and join the fun. No cover charge. The Rusty Nail, 1310 South Fifth Avenue. Info: (910) 251-1888 or www.capefearblues.org.

Wednesday Farmers' Market

8 a.m. – 1 p.m. Open-air market offering fresh produce, plants, baked goods and the best in handmade crafts. Open through November 26. Admission: Free. Poplar Grove Plantation, 10200 U.S. Highway 17 North, Wilmington. Info: (910) 686-9518 or www.poplargrove.com.

Wednesday Seaside Story Time

10–11:30 a.m. Join the princess and her fairytale friends for stories, crafts and games for boys and girls alike. Admission: Free. Ocean Front Park, 105 Atlantic Avenue, Kure Beach. Info: (910) 458-8216 or www.townofwrightsvillebeach.org.

CALENDAR

Wednesday — T'ai Chi at CAM

12–1 p.m. Qigong (Practicing the Breath of Life) with Martha Gregory. Open to beginner and experienced participants. Members: $5. Non-members: $8. Cameron Art Museum, 3201 South Seventeenth Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 395-5999 or www.cameronartmuseum.org.

Wednesday — Beer Tasting

5–6:30 p.m. For this week's special, visit Sweet 'n Savory Pub on Facebook. Admission: Free. Sweet 'n Savory Pub, 2012 Eastwood Road, Wilmington. Info: (910) 679-8101 or www.thepubatsweetnsavory.com.

Wednesday — Wine Pairing

5–6:30 p.m. Come in for a Sweet 'n Savory wine pairing and learn about a specific style of wine every week as well as which foods best bring out its flavor. All bottles of wine are $5 off. Sweet 'n Savory Cafe, 1611 Pavilion Place, Wilmington. Info: (910) 256-0115 or www.sweetnsavorycafe.com.

Wednesday — Nature Series

6–7 p.m. & 7–8 p.m. Summer evening nature series; new theme every week. Admission: $5. Halyburton Park, 4099 South Seventeenth Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 341-0075 or www.halyburtonpark.com.

Wednesday — Group Meditation

6:15–7:15 p.m. A growing community of people who desire connection within themselves and with others. 8/6: Musical Mantra; 8/13: Awakening Wisdom; 8/20: Self-Love; 8/27: Prosperity. Cost: $10–15 (you choose). McKay Healing Arts, 4916 Wrightsville Avenue, Wilmington. Info: (949) 547-4402 or www.allllovehealing.com.

Wednesday — ComedyNOW

8 p.m. Local, regional and national acts, open mics, standup, films and more. Bar and kitchen open. Tickets: $3. TheatreNOW, 19 South Tenth Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 399-3669 or www.theatrewilmington.com.

Thursday — Boardwalk Blast Music

6:30–9:30 p.m. Family-friendly concerts at the Boardwalk featuring a sunset fireworks display. 8/7: 40 East (contemporary country); 8/14: Drew Smith Band (classic country); 8/21: Lynne & The Wave (rock & roll); 8/29: Big Time Party Band (dance & party). Admission: Free. Carolina Beach Boardwalk, Cape Fear Boulevard, Carolina Beach. Info: (910) 458-8434 or www.pleasureislandnc.org.

Thursday — Sunset SUP Series

6:30 p.m. Join Blockade Runner for a ten-minute lesson and race every Thursday through August 28. Each week will feature a different course; kids races every other week. Admission: Free. Blockade Runner Beach Resort, 275 Waynick Boulevard, Wrightsville Beach. Info: (910) 256-2251 or www.blockade-runner.com.

Thursday and Friday — Yoga at the CAM

12–1 p.m. (Thursday); 5:30–6:30 p.m. (Friday). Join in a soothing retreat sure to charge you up while you relax in a beautiful, comfortable setting. Sessions are ongoing and open to beginner and experienced participants. Members: $5. Non-members: $8. Cameron Art Museum, 3201 South Seventeenth Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 395-5999 or www.cameronartmuseum.org.

Thursday and Sunday — CAM Public Tours

7:30 p.m. (Thursday); 2 p.m. (Sunday). Explore the newest exhibits at Cameron Art Museum, 3201 South Seventeenth Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 395-5999 or www.cameronartmuseum.org.

Thursday–Sunday — Live Theatre

7:30 p.m. (Thursday – Saturday); 3 p.m. (Sunday). Good People by Pulitzer Prize winner David Lindsay-Abaire follows the life of Margie Walsh, a single mother taking care of her adult handicapped daughter. Admission: $25. Red Barn Studio Theatre, 1122 South Third Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 251-1788 or www.thalian.org.

Friday and Saturday — Sampling

6–8 p.m. (Friday); 12–5 p.m. (Saturday). Sample unique boutique wines as well as extra virgin olive oils and vinegars before you buy. Admission: Free. Taste the Olive, The Forum, 1125 Military Cutoff Road, Wilmington. Info: (910) 256-6457 or www.tastetheolive.com.

Friday — Downtown Sundown Concert

6–10 p.m. Free downtown concert series overlooking the Cape Fear River. 8/1: Dave Mathews Tribute Band; 8/8: Coconut Groove (Steely Dan tribute); 8/15: Slippery When Wet (Bon Jovi tribute); 8/22: The Right On Band (1970's tribute); 8/29: Departure (Journey tribute). Admission: Free. Riverfront Park, North Water Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 763-7349 or www.downtownsundown.com.

Saturday — Riverfront Farmers' Market

8 a.m. – 1 p.m. Curbside market where local farmers, producers, artists, crafters sell their goods along the banks of the Cape Fear River. Open through November 22. Admission: Free. Riverfront Park, North Water Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 538-6223 or www.wilmingtondowntown.com.

Saturday — Carolina Beach Farmers' Market

8 a.m. – 1 p.m. Outdoor "island style" market featuring live music and local growers, producers and artisans selling food, herbal products and handmade crafts. Open through October 4. Admission: Free. Carolina Beach Lake Park, Highway 421 and Atlanta Avenue, Carolina Beach. Info: (910) 431-8122 or www.carolinabeachfarmersmarket.com.

Saturday — Historic Walking Tour

10–11:30 a.m. Discover the Port City's rich past, and architectural, social and cultural history through a guided walking tour of Forest Hills and the Streetcar Suburbs hosted by the Historic Wilmington Foundation. Admission: $5–10. 1801 Market Street & 602 Colonial Drive, Wilmington. Info: (910) 762-2511 or www.historicwilmington.org.

Sunday — Historic Marketplace

10 a.m. – 3 p.m. Downtown marketplace featuring some of the finest arts and crafts vendors in the Cape Fear area and entertainment. Admission: Free. Riverfront Park, North Water Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 254-0907 or www.wilmingtondowntown.com.

Saturday — Super Saturday Fun Time

3 p.m. Live theater and variety show. Tickets: $8. TheatreNOW, 19 South Tenth Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 399-3669 or www.theatrewilmington.com.

Saturday — Rooftop Concerts

7–10 p.m. Enjoy live music on the rooftop of the Reel Café every Saturday through 10/4. 8/2: The Paris Thieves; 8/9: Kennedy Park; 8/16: Justin Fox Trio; 8/23: The Casserole. Admission: $5. The Reel Café, 100 South Front Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 251-1832 or reelcafe.net.

Sunday — Boogie in the Park Concert

4–7 p.m. Family-friendly concerts in the park. 8/3: Seneca Guns (eclectic rock); 8/10: Train Wreck (country & southern rock); 8/17: Machine Gun (classic rock & modern); 8/24: Millenia Funk'n Band (funk, rock & dance); 8/31: 40 East Band (modern, country & pop). Admission: Free. Ocean Front Park, 105 Atlantic Avenue, Kure Beach. Info: (910) 456-8216 or www.townofkurebeach.org.

Sunday — Bluewater Waterfront Music

4–7 p.m. Summer concerts on the waterfront patio. 8/3: Central Park (classic rock & modern); 8/10: Heart & Soul (classic rock & beach); 8/17: Mark Roberts (Motown & classic rock); 8/24: Lunar Tide (classic rock & modern); 8/31: Back of the Boat Tour (yacht rock). Admission: Free. Bluewater Waterfront Grill, 4 Marina Street, Wrightsville Beach. Info: (910) 256-8500 or www.bluewaterdining.com.

Sunday — Movies at the Lake

8:45 p.m. Family-friendly outdoor movie screening by the lake at Carolina Beach. Popcorn, soda and candy available for purchase. 8/3: *The Lego Movie* (2014, PG, 100 min.); 8/10: *Sammy 2* (2012, PG, 92 min.); 8/17: *Tad the Lost Explorer* (2012, PG, 92 min.); 8/24: *West Side Story* (1961, UR, 152 min.); 8/31: *Planes* (2013, PG, 91 min.). Admission: Free. Carolina Beach Lake Park, Highway 421 and Atlanta Avenue, Carolina Beach. Info: (910) 458-8434 or www.pleasureisland.org.

To add a calendar event, please contact Ashley at ashley@saltmagazinenc.com. Events must be submitted the first of the month, one month prior to the event.

Port City People

Paint-Out Art Show

Burgwin-Wright House & Gardens
Friday & Saturday May 30–31, 2014
Photographs by Bill Ritenour

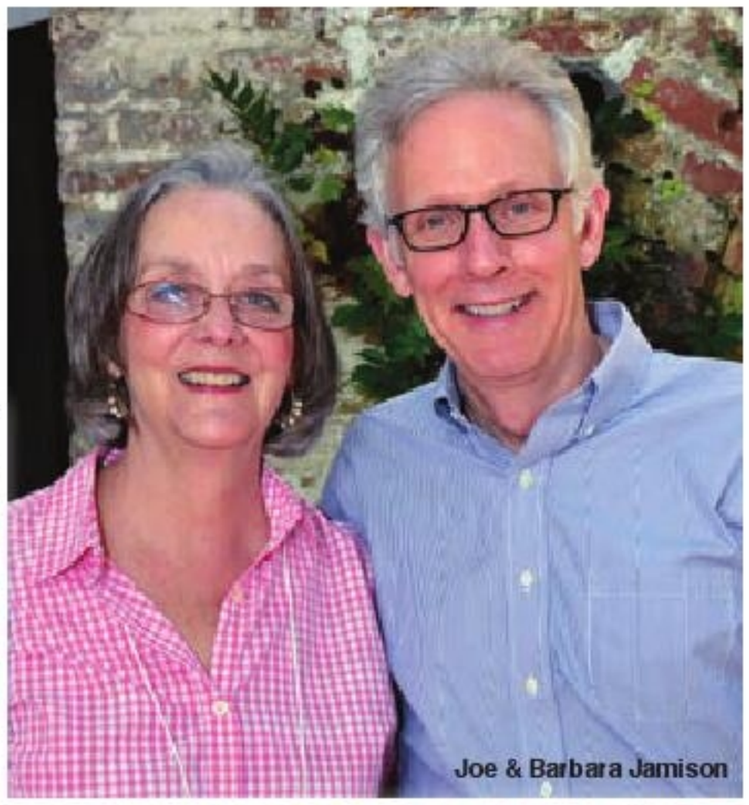
Lori Joy Peterson

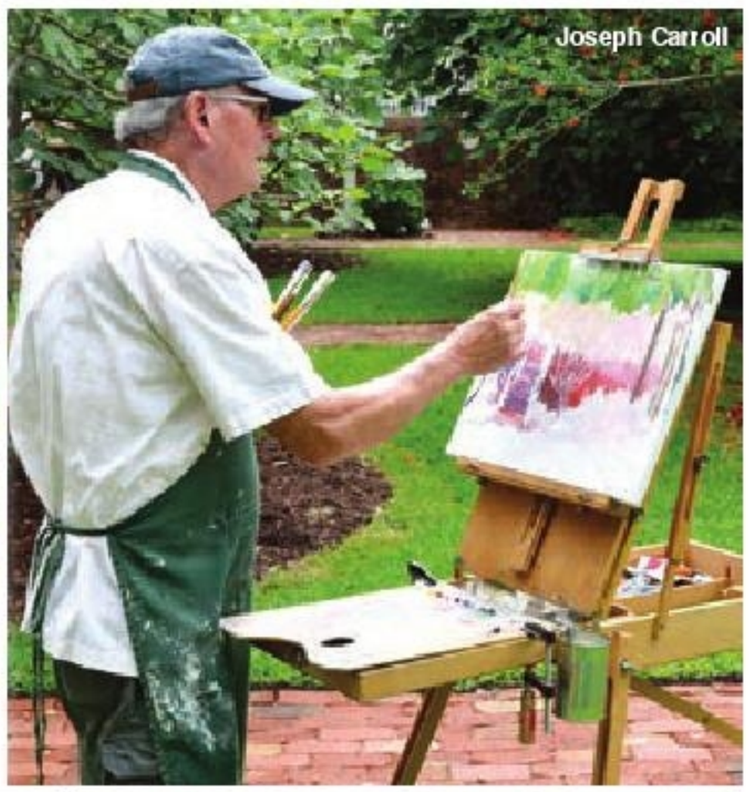
Ann Hair

David Wilson & Joanna Tine

Mary E. Smith

Lorena Redding


Joe & Barbara Jamison


Joseph Carroll

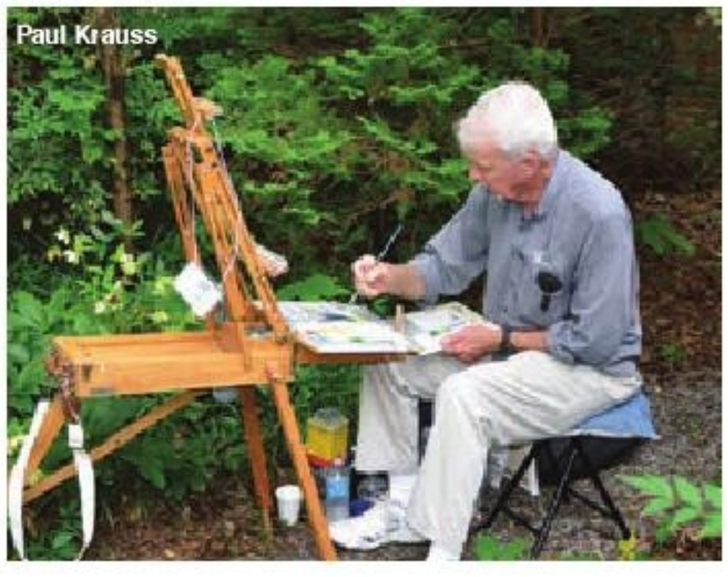
Ann Lees

Jennifer Mishoe

Loulie Scharf

Chappy Valente

Karen Lee Crenshaw


Paul Krauss

Port City People

Masonboro.org Benefit & Auction

Bradley Creek Marina Clubhouse

Thursday, June 5, 2014

Photographs by Bill Ritenour

Cam Grimes, Maggie Matthews

Kathy Raimes, Larry Yelton

Masonboro Sound

Megan & Charlie Toothman

Alfonso Dewitt, Charlie English

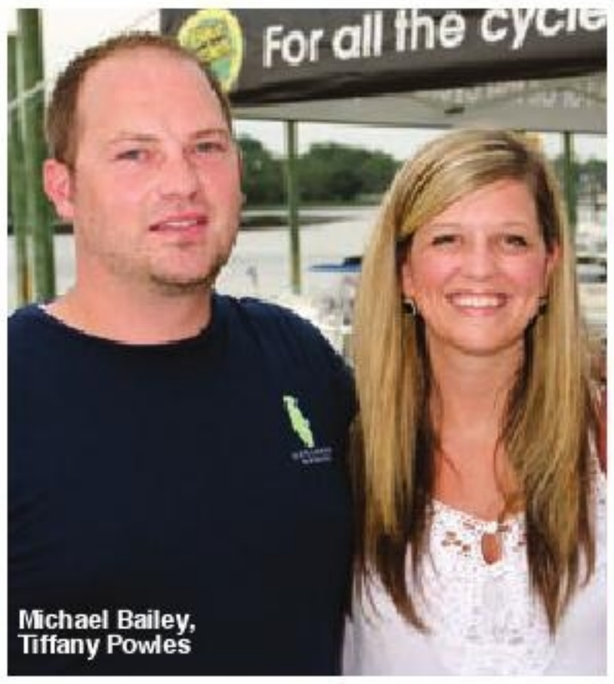
Mike Eakins, Tobin Gratz, Lee Crouch

Sailor, Edwin & Beth Martin

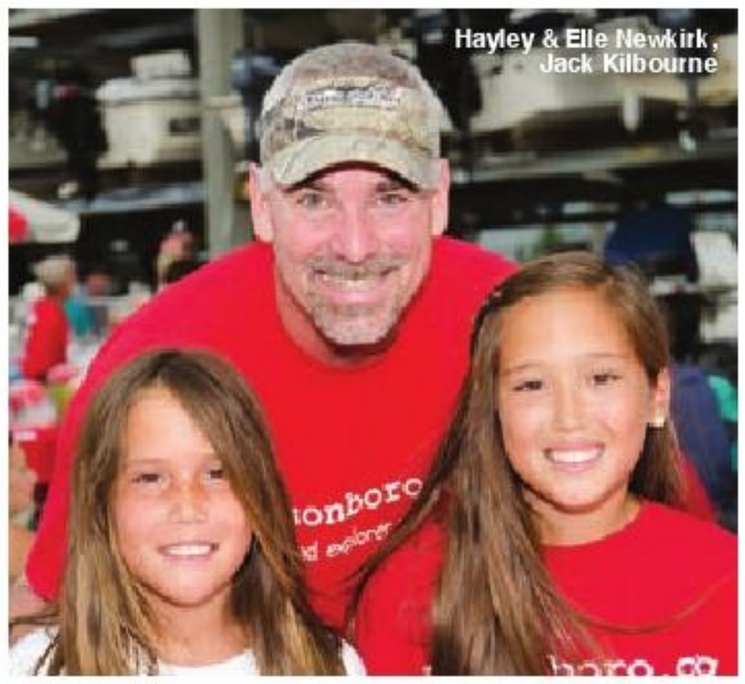
Veronica Godwin, Charlie Godwin, Richard Johnson

Sandy Mazzola, Haywood Newkirk

Eddison Scottford, Matt Massarell & Hans Scottford



Michael Bailey, Tiffany Powles


Hayley & Elle Newkirk, Jack Kilbourne

Port City People

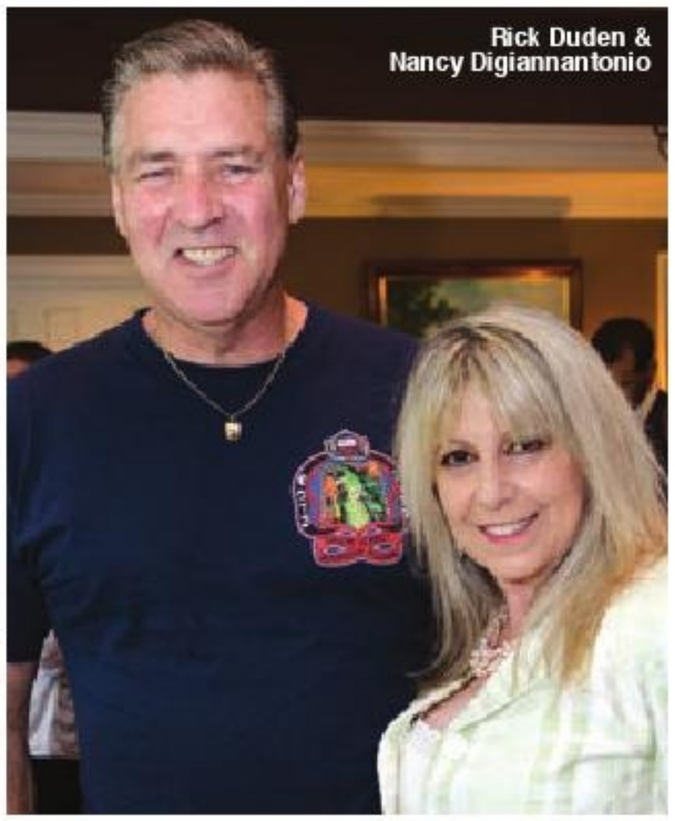
Coastal Horizons Center's Annual Luncheon at the Country Club of Landfall

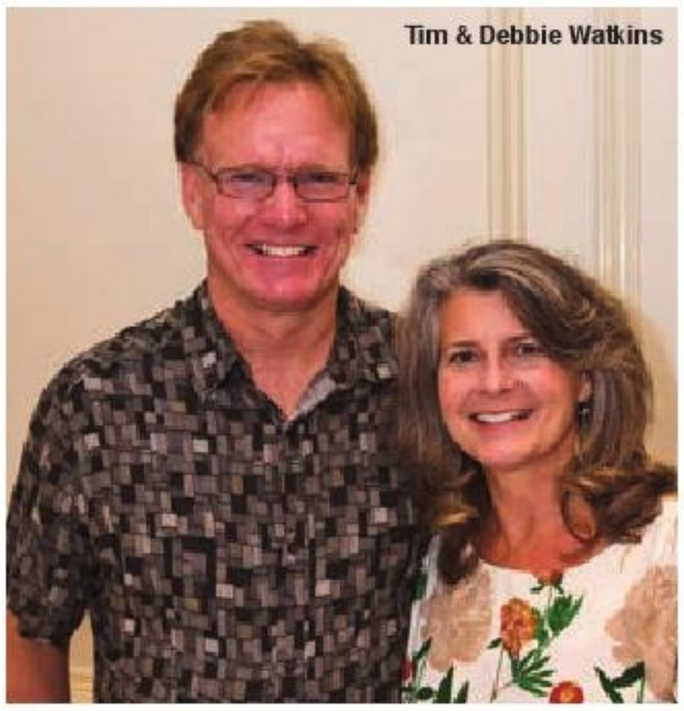
Friday, June 6, 2014

Photographs by Bill Ritenour

Frances Weller & Margaret Weller-Stargell

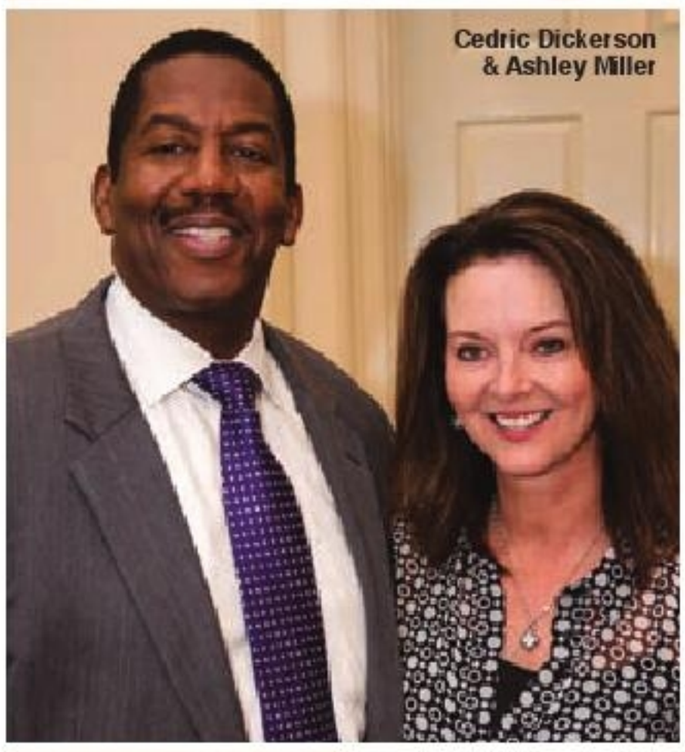
Darryl Strawberry signing autograph for Bernie Malman

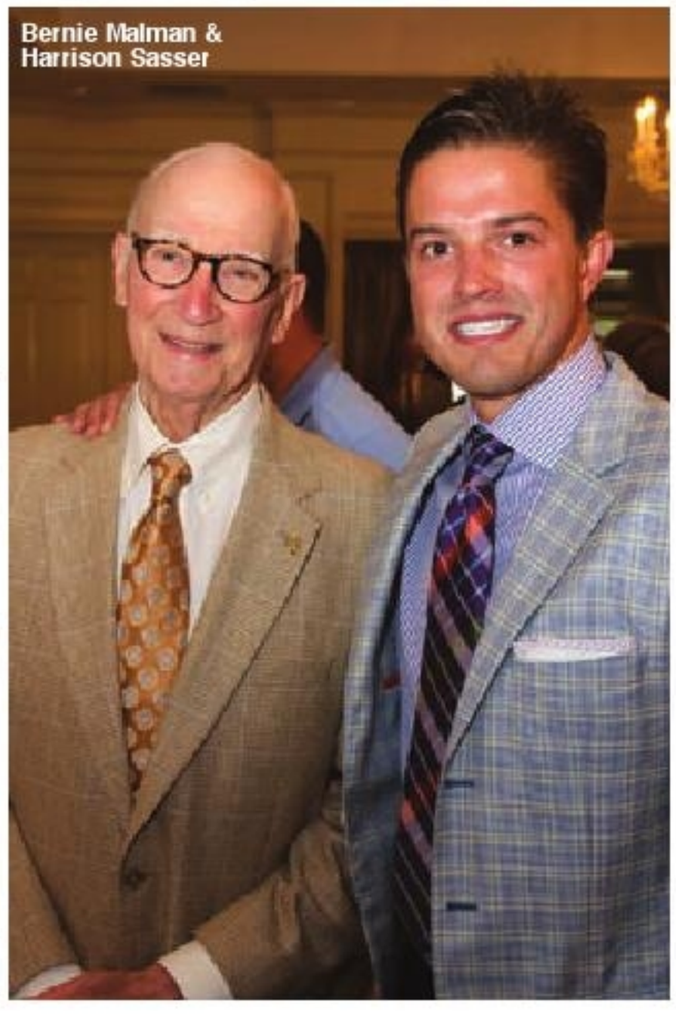

Rick Duden & Nancy Digiannantonio


Tim & Debbie Watkins

John Stargell, Linda Pearce Thomas, & Ferrold Thomas

Frances Weller, Bo Dean & David Morrison


Cedric Dickerson & Ashley Miller


Bernie Malman & Harrison Sasser

Jessica Green & Delores Frans

Jenifer Burns & Kelli Williamson

Port City People

Kids Making It Hippie Ball

Brooklyn Arts Center
Friday, June 20, 2014
Photographs by Bill Ritenour

Randall Roberts, Donna Halsey & Patty Prowtey

Roberta Smith, Rachel Schneiderman & Earl Smith

Chunky Huse

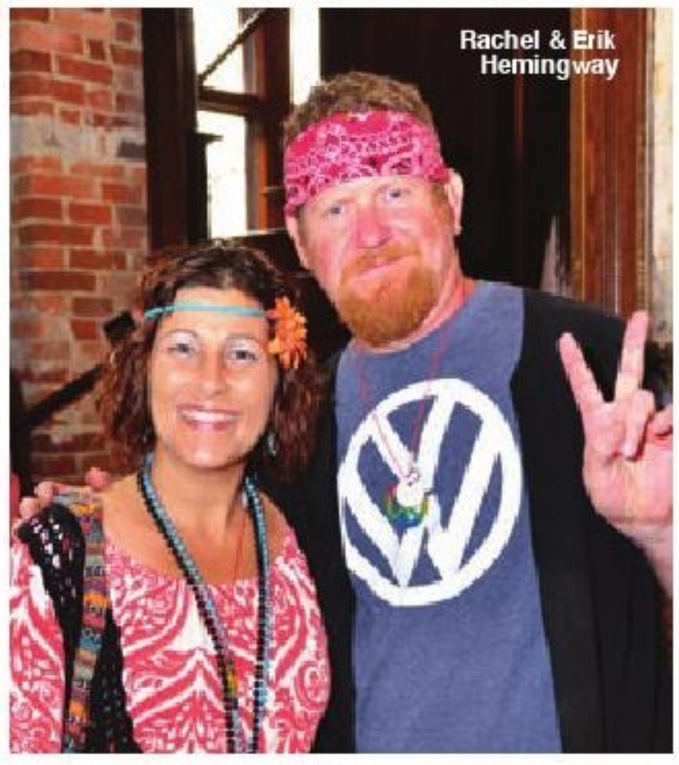
Rebecca Blackmore, Jonathan & Laura Crane

Connie, Sam & Kyle Horton

Wendy Johnson & Mark Tarter

Dorothy Rankin, Rich & Lulu Leder, Lee Lowrimore

Judy Pawinski


Rachel & Erik Hemingway

Clancy & Susan Thompson

David & Teri Mote

Lynn & Jim Sears

Port City People

Airlie Gardens Summer Concert

Friday, July 4, 2014

Photographs by Bill Ritenour

Richard Sorber, Deborah Sorber, Lynne Wood

Will Nutt, Hudson Simmerman, Jan Peacock, Russ, Christy & Hadley Simmerman

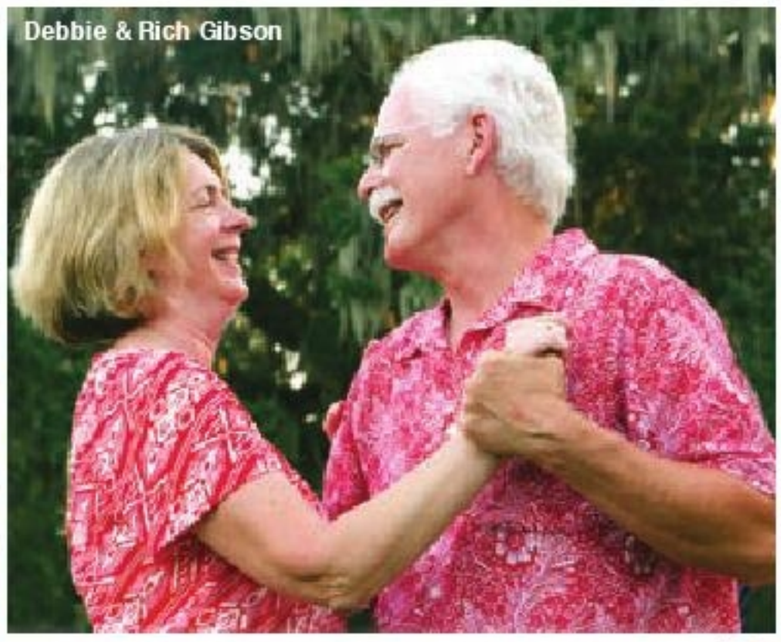
Julie-Ann & Evan with Vincent & Anthony Scott-Pollock

Eleanor & Tim Swing

Christen Sylvester, John Gornik, Virginia, Tom & Julia Sylvester

Bette & David Bauereis

Christina Rivenbark & John Peck


Debbie & Rich Gibson

Sandee Spradley & Mike Miller (of The Imitations)

Hail Yeah, Caesar

Don't let August get your goat

By Astrid Stellanova

Did your Mama tell you why August is so important? Because of Caesar Augustus? Surprise! – he was a Libran. Or because it's National Goat Cheese month? Look to the stars, Lovey. The Perseid meteor shower occurs mid-month.

Leo (July 23–August 22)
Lordy mercy, when you cast such a wide net, you are going to haul up a whole lot of trash. So, here you are, dealing with flotsam and jetsam, but you went fishing, didn't you? Do some triage on your own life, baby. Let your legs of faith carry you right where you need to go. You may complain, and do often and loudly, but you are also a born finisher and you are almost as capable as you think you are. This month will be almost too calm for your tastes. By mid-month, you will enjoy new income that will make your pricey tastes nearly affordable.

Virgo (August 23–September 22)
Gut check time. Recently you've been the top ticketing agent for guilt trips – give it a rest. Can you stop issuing tickets? It's second nature for you to help people. So get in synch and stop being critical. You may want the last word but you aren't *all that* all the time. Except, when Venus transits your sign August 12–September 5, you are going to be unusually creative and spectacular. Keep a journal.

Libra (September 23–October 22)
Go deep or don't go at all. Deep, as in, deeper than a pie pan. All cylinders will click this month – socially, romantically, financially and even emotionally. You'll find yourself almost bewildered by the positive attention you get. The colors blue and pink will bring you some big magic this month, but don't wear them thirty days in a row, OK? You may think it's all coincidinky those colors work for you, but it ain't, Honey Child.

Scorpio (October 23–November 21)
Let's just get off that high horse you've been riding, and lower your standards. Life is 80 percent reality and 20 percent where you want to be. You will always want what you can't have. Fuggedaboutit, Darling. Work for what you want; dust off the résumé and get it out there. You have a transit between August 12 and September 5 that will make it easier to make work prospects come together to suit secretive ole you.

Sagittarius (November 22–December 21)
The saying is, you can't make a comeback when you haven't been anywhere. Get off the sofa – the cushions are sagging! Fish out the change under them cushions and go somewhere! Adventure calls, you're overdue, and luck (plus spare change) is on your side. Between the 12th and the 15th, you have a unique opportunity when Venus and Mercury travel through Leo. This means put yourself out there – flip a coin – take a trip or a chance. The transit favors you all month.

Capricorn (December 22–January 19)
If the buck really did stop with you, you'd finally get paid. You've been responsible since you were 6 years old and got a paper route. Time to experience irresponsibility! Push back from the desk and take the trip you've been daydreaming about this month. The first two weeks bring a time of opportunity when Mercury enters Leo. By the 25th, you may well find yourself overseas, living the dream, Baby.

Aquarius (January 20–February 18)
Ever have the feeling it's simpler to get older than get smarter? You have spent most of your life not caring what other people think, and why start now? You really might just save the world, but, more importantly, yourself. When Venus enters Leo after the 12th, relationships resolve and you can sink into a bliss-out time.

Pisces (February 19–March 20)
The water is hot, right? So take your finger out, and don't just stand there talking about how durn scalding the H2O is. After all, affection and understanding are what you are craving, even more than attention. The good news is, the stars line up for you when Mercury enters Virgo on the 15th. That bad patch with your loved one gets fixed up very nicely, by the way. Just squirt some Fix-a-Flat into your blow out and keep on trucking, as all will be forgiven.

Aries (March 21–April 19)
Can you put out a fire by blowing on it? Or breathing it? There is a lot of strength in being a risk-taker, but you, ever-ramming Ram, got burned. Your daredevil self knew it would happen. And you don't want advice from Astrid either. So make a note, and take it in stride, but don't throw caution to the wind. When Mercury enters your sign you will be obsessed with work. The full moon on the 10th is going to be something else, Baby. Make it fun. And lead by example.

Taurus (April 20–May 20)
The full moon on the 10th and new moon on the 25th mean good – no, excellent – news. I know this has come up before, but bears repeating: wonder why they named one of the most popular cars after your sign? Because most Taureans had rather fight than switch. That's right. A Taurus will work hard. A Taurus won't give up. A Taurus may not be charming, but they are reliant. And this month, you experience a nice reward, long due you.

Gemini (May 21–June 20)
Time to inhabit your own fool self. You got your mind together, but your body is falling apart. Stop talking and start walking. Watch your diet. Get some sleep. You are going to need it because company is coming, and your home is where everybody is going to gather. Activity is going to ramp up from the 15th onward. Roll out the welcome mat, but roll it back up when you are really exhausted – even you need shut-eye sometimes.

Cancer (June 21-July 22)
Suspicious? Sulky? Crabby? Your imagination is on overdrive. What you think happened is not exactly accurate. Give your friends another chance, and use it for a good story. Because most things in life are material for you, anyway. During the full moon on the 10th, you receive unexpected news that is beneficial and might make an opportunity open up that wouldn't have been possible before.

For years, Astrid Stellanova owned and operated Curl Up and Dye Beauty Salon in the boondocks of North Carolina until arthritic fingers and her popular astrological readings provoked a new career path.

Pure Passion

Bowled over by a beautiful vine

By Ann Ipock

As my husband, Russ, likes to say, "No good deed ever goes unpunished." I discovered what that means when, just the other day, I pulled a passion vine root out of the ground to give to my sister, Cathy, who wanted to plant it in her own yard. She was standing nearby when I trudged through my English cutting garden, through the god-awful red mulch (dang our H.O.A.), to the beautiful vine in question.

That evening I searched through the tender, new growth and found a baby root coming up from the trunk of the mother plant. Aha! Oh yeah, baby! This is going to be simple, I thought. Cathy stood there grinning, excitedly, lending me moral support.

Upon closer inspection, however, the baby was connected to a very thick root. I can do this, I thought. I knelt down, careful my knees didn't touch the razor-like mulch. I took a couple of deep breaths. Then, using all my strength and weight, which isn't insignificant, I *pullllllled* on that sucker like there was no tomorrow. For reasons I'll never understand, the imposing root, which resembled a small stick and seemed quite attached, popped off easily and immediately.

The sheer centrifugal force knocked me backward, slamming my body down hard against Mother Earth. Curiously, I tried to break my fall with my wrist, but to no avail. I'm sure it looked like something you'd see on *America's Funniest Home Videos*. I'm still surprised that I didn't do a backward somersault. Thankfully, there was no pain. In fact, the thought of pain never entered my mind, much less my back, arms or chest — that would come later. What did enter my mind was victory! I'd finally gotten Cathy this wonderful, heirloom vine that produces huge, fabulous, sweet-smelling purple flowers. She'd been bugging me about it for weeks.

After the great fall, Cathy looked at me like she was trying hard not to laugh.

"Oh, no! What can I do?" she asked.

"Well, for starters, you could help get me up OUTTA HERE!" I said.

But in order for her to help me, I had to do my part, meeting her halfway. Either that, or a gurney would be needed. During this time, I said silent prayers of gratitude that Russ didn't witness the accident. He would have teased me forever and it would have brought him such joy at my expense. He lives for moments like these. I carefully rubbed my hands together to brush off the mulch, a million tiny potential splinters, just dying to stick in me. And then I managed to bring my body up to a squatting frog position (minus the hop). Cathy tugged gently, but I fell backward, laughing. I raised up on the second try. She gave me a sympathetic sisterly hug as we rallied excitedly with our prized twig. Was it just my imagination, or did she in fact search my hand for the plant while searching my body for injuries?

The next day was fairly normal. Russ and I went to church, then brunch, then Walmart whereupon my sweet hubby bought me the kind of gift that warms a gardening gal's heart. A 125-foot, heavy duty, no tangle garden hose. I'd rather have that than jewelry, honey — in the summertime, that is, when I'm actively gardening. In the winter, I'd prefer a Caribbean cruise and a nice piece of jewelry before debarkation.

We came home and Russ hooked up my hose, which I used to water all my new plants — a Japanese fatsia, ginger lilies and Mexican petunias from Cathy's yard. Next I went to the grocery store, came home and cooked dinner. All was well.

But about 7:30 that night, an inexplicable, mysterious pain came over me that intensified with each breath — a crippling burning in my chest, under my arms, my ribs and back. It was excruciating. Since I'm a former medical transcriptionist, I know how doctors rate pain: 1–10. Mine was 100!

Twenty-four hours later, I'm on the mend, but not unscathed. You see, I had to tell Russ what happened, which bruised my ego, but at least he didn't get to see it. The pills that the doc gave me resulted in a sixteen-hour deep sleep. I'm still sore, but thankfully I didn't break any bones. Perhaps passion vine is adequately named because my passion for gardening is still here — however, my passion for careful gardening now rules.

Ann Ipock last wrote about driving to great music in the April issue of Salt *magazine.*

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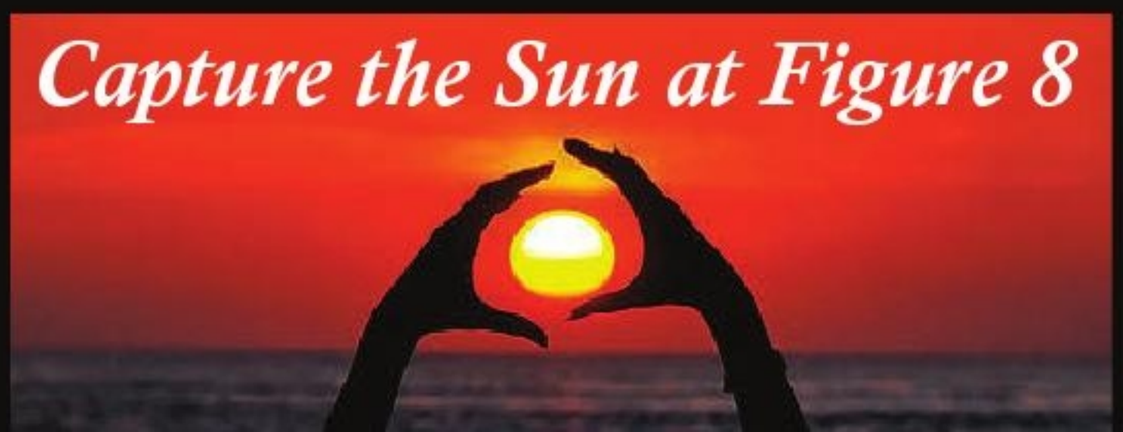

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